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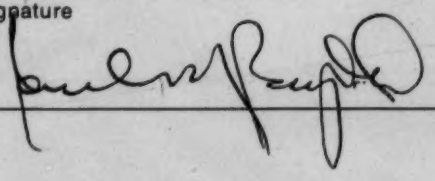

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY THROUGH THE RELIGIOUS COVENANT: A BAHĀ'Ī CASE HISTORY

by

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A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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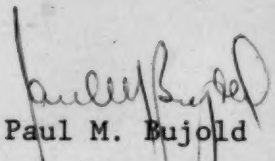

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Hayden Roberts, PhD, Extension

DATED 21 APRIL, 1983.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my wife, Cynthia, and to our children, Mattéa, Naisa and Adina, and to the memory of my sister, Carmen Jeanne.

ABSTRACT

This thesis is an examination of religious covenants as community development tools. It proposes that, because religions have covenants that have been given to the community by its God, it has a greater likelihood of being successful in the development of a community than a secular development plan would have. Further, it proposes that a religious covenant constitutes sufficient cause to be considered as a community development plan with definite temporal consequences rather than an agreement with only spiritual effects.

Common notions of community development are examined to determine what constitutes true community development so that this definition can be used as a basis for the comparison between religious and secular community development plans. Covenants, legal, clinical and religious, are also examined to ascertain the nature of a covenant and to determine its suitability to act as a community development plan. Nine points are outlined which seem to meet the criteria of development plans. These points are: direction concerning future changes to the plan, teachings to create a new awareness in the community, a line of authorized succession to the original law giver, the definition of community membership, the provision of laws relating to the law giver, the provision of laws relating to the community, the creation of authorized institutions to carry out the plan, the provision of laws relating to these institutions, and finally,

provisions for dealing with those who would disrupt the community or its development.

The Bahā'ī Covenant, one of the newest religious covenants to direct the development of a community, is then examined in relation to the established definition of community development and of the covenant, both in theory, as represented by its Scriptures which are rich in plans and directives for the development of a strong and well integrated community, and in practice, as represented by the workings of the community of the Bahā'ī Faith in the last 139 years. From this study, it is determined that the Bahā'ī Covenant does, indeed, constitute sufficient cause to be considered a community development plan.

The study concludes with a comparison between the Bahā'ī Covenant, in specific, and religious covenants, in general, as compared to secular development plans. From this comparison, it is determined that religious covenants are better suited to the development of communities since they present a long-term, stable and well-detailed form of plan whereas secular development plans are subject to the whims of the participants in the plan and, therefore, likely to be unstable and unreliable over the long-term. The reason for this difference seems to lie in the fact that religion is transcendent and therefore goes beyond the individual while secular development is basically geared toward the individual's "felt-needs".

PREFACE

One of the cardinal principles of the Bahā'ī Faith, and one which maintains the integrity of its Scripture and of its Covenant, is the principle that only authorized Institutions can interpret the Scripture and assign it a meaning that is authoritive. While individuals are permitted to study the Scripture and arrive at their own understandings, these understandings, unless they are identical with those expressed by the officially authorized interpreters, are merely personal and have no effect upon the community or its development.

The author of this work would like to ensure that the interpretations presented here, unless they are quoted writings or Scripture, are taken only at face-value, that is, as personal interpretations. The reader is referred to the original sources to obtain definitive interpretations.

P.M.B.
Killam, Alberta
21 April, 1983

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> "There never has been an extensive degree of consensus on a conceptually rigorous definition of community development. The term is elusive, just as are the goals that community development efforts are designed to pursue"
> (Warren, 1971:75)

1.1 Religion and Community

The global scale and prehistoric roots of the development of community through religion warrant some study on the part of serious students of community development. As far back as Hinduism and as recently as the Bahā'ī Faith, members of various religious groups have been socializing their fellows, developing the many institutions and rules needed to govern themselves, carrying out activities to enhance the private and public lives of their members, assuring that the community would be on-going through birth or conversion and acquiring the necessary material goods to meet the needs of both the faithful and the church or movement. We see around us the living monuments of these successes: churches, schools, hospitals, homes for the aged and the infirm, orphanages, clubs and study groups, religious courts and tribunals, political parties and forums, newspapers, radio and television stations and programs and a myriad of other

institutions, all of which stand for the growth, continued strength and overall viability of these communities based on religion and its principles.

Successes in this realm of community growth have not come about by accident. Rather, the members of religion have, with certainty and single-mindedness, set about their appointed task of ensuring that both the development and the stability of their community are maintained according to the mandate given by their Scriptures. That mandate, said to come directly from the Godhead or its emissaries and developed and elaborated over time to meet the changing needs of the community and its institutions, provides a community development blueprint that is without parallel in the world of secular community development. Using that blueprint, members of these communities can, with assurance and without lengthy negotiations used to arrive at a consensus in the secular community, concentrate on the development process, itself, rather than becoming embroiled in points of politics, philosophy or orientation, all these details having been provided for in the master plan of the religion which gives members a common understanding at the inception of the movement.

Contrast this with the less-than-ideal state of secular community development—struggling to establish a theoretical basis for its activities and a practical footing in various national communities around the world, entangled in compli-

cated, often unproductive, negotiations to establish a blueprint for development, caught in the changing tides of political whims and provincial mores, controlled by a powerful few and hamstrung by the inconsistency of the training of its front-line field practioners and theoreticians. The monuments of secular community development cannot boast to have weathered the years with the same confidence about an eternal future as can the monuments of religious community development. A citizen participation project loses ground or is abolished subject to changing political fortunes, lack of funds or apathy, e.g., The Alberta Human Resources Development Authority (Glick:1978); an adult education system is quashed when it begins to threaten officially sanctioned institutions, e.g., Brazil (Freire:1970); an entire economy is destroyed by war, e.g., Vietnam, Kampuchia, Biafra. Many of the surviving monuments of the secular world come not from secular development efforts but were inherited from the world of religion. Schools, for example, were largely religious institutions until fairly recently and, initially at least, were more concerned with the education of a religious elite to carry on the affairs of the movement rather than with the education of the masses. That is not to say that secular community development has not developed monuments of its own. These monuments, such as national redevelopment schemes in China, Cuba and Tanzania, are still too close historically to have their viability and success established.

Secular community development also faces another problem

not evident in religious community development, namely, the definition of what is or is not to be included in the definition of the community. In religious communities, groups of adherents of one religion make up definable and distinct units, which, whether viewed on a local or global level, can be viewed as a community. Secular communities may be physically definable in that they occupy specified geographical territories or are made up of clearly identifiable members, e.g., the male community, the black community, *et cetera*, but often the homogeneity and global networking seen in religious communities is not as evident in secular communities.

The clarity with which religious community developers face their task should lead one to question why, in the thousands of years of religious history, has man had such obvious successes accomplishing through religion what he has been struggling to achieve after at least a century of disappointing effort using the secular development approach? Is there something about secular development which impedes its progress from the start and conversely, is there something about religious development which ensures its successes? This study plans to address these two questions and provide some insight into the factors which may be able to explain this apparent discrepancy between the two methods.

1.2 Purpose

Broadly stated, the purpose of this thesis is to examine the similarities and differences which exist between religious and secular community development through the respective mechanisms and theoretical frameworks existing within each of these two methods. These mechanisms and theoretical frameworks, gleaned from a study of the Scriptures and practices of religion and the academic literature and practices of secular community development, will help to explain these similarities and discrepancies extant in the two approaches and will lead to a greater understanding of the results, or lack thereof, obtained through the use of these two approaches.

Once a greater understanding is achieved, it seems natural that some attempt should be made to propose changes that could improve the results of both types of community development. A secondary purpose of this thesis, then, is to examine some of these options bearing in mind that there will always be certain areas of development that will remain the exclusive jurisdiction of one method or the other e.g., internal community development in religion and politically motivated community development in the secular community. Some merging of the two methods and their respective theoretical frameworks should be of benefit to students in either camp.

The major cause of success in any development effort

seems to rest not so much with the method that is used but with the blueprint which motivates the achievement of the goals of the community. Successes attributed to secular development projects in China, Cuba and others and to the development of various religious communities would have to be attributed to the plan or blueprint used since in each case widely differing methods of development were used to achieve the goals set out in the respective plans. In the religious community, the blueprint or plan is called a covenant* since it is perceived as an agreement between the community and its God, the terms of which are dictated by God at the birth of the community. Another purpose of this thesis, then, will be to examine the Scriptures of various religions, most notably those of the Bahā'ī Faith, to discover if the covenant constitutes a necessary and sufficient cause for orderly development. In keeping with the general intent of the study, a similar examination of secular community development literature will be undertaken to ascertain if such a covenant can be said to exist in secular development projects.

The examination of the plans, methods and theories of secular and religious community development efforts will be based on the following propositions:

1. that development, in both the secular and the religious community, is carried out

*The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, edited by H.W. Fowler and F.G. Fowler, defines *covenant* as: "Compact, bargain; (Law) contract under seal, clause of this; (Bibl.) compact between God and the Israelites,..."p. 282

on the basis of a common understanding amongst the members of the community,

2. that the common understanding amongst the members of the community constitutes a covenant, whether implicit or explicit,
3. that the covenant describes the necessary and sufficient causes for the development of the community,
4. that such a covenant is likely to enhance the success of any community development project since it is usually provided as a "given" at the inception of the project, and
5. that religious communities operate under more explicit and authoritive covenants than is possible in secular communities; this, perhaps, explaining the differences in the success rates between the two methods.

1.3 Relevance to Community Development

Present-day community development literature seems to fall into three broad categories: material which describes the community, (Bernard:1973, Warren:1971); material which describes the community development method, (Biddle and Biddle: 1965, Case and Hoffman:n.d.) and material which describes the development plan, (UN:1974, Goulet:1971). In order to be useful any new study must, in some way, add to the existing

body of knowledge, either by providing new information or by evaluating existing information. This thesis seeks to both evaluate existing information and provide new knowledge in each of the three main categories of community development knowledge. First, the thesis will examine existing secular community development literature pertaining to the description of the community and will then compare the results of this study to the description of the community as found in the Bahā'ī Faith, hitherto unexplored in community development literature. Next, the plan for community development in the Bahā'ī Faith will be outlined and compared to existing community development plans in the secular world in an attempt to find some common ground between these two systems. Finally, community development methods in both secular community development and in the Bahā'ī Faith will be presented and proposals made for the improvement of both development methods.

While religion and community development studies are not foreign to the literature, e.g., Verge:1976, Brown:1972, there seem to be no studies undertaken which probe the area of development plans and religious covenants as development tools and certainly no study looking at this topic from the Bahā'ī point of view. This thesis will, therefore, fill a gap which exists in the link between religious and secular community development and will bring to light the theories and methods of one of the newest religions with a world-embracing point-of-view, namely, the Bahā'ī Faith.

1.4 Methodology

The information in this thesis comes from two sources: from a review of secular community development literature and a review of the religious Scripture of most major world religions including the writings of the Bahā'ī Faith and from the experience of the author as both a secular community developer and as a Bahā'ī. The latter information will be dealt with in the case history of the Bahā'ī Faith which comprises a major portion of this study. Because of the scope of this study, it has been unnecessary, at this time, to include statistical studies and evaluations since these would tend to detract from the philosophical nature of this thesis.

This thesis has five sections. The first section comprises a review of secular community development literature in order to provide a base for the development of an understanding of community development plans, methods and theories. This section will form part of Chapter 1.

The second section of the thesis will examine the nature of the covenant as a tool of development. This will be undertaken through a review of the Scriptures of the major world religions including: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islām, the Bābī Faith and the Bahā'ī Faith. Because this thesis limits itself to a study of the nature of the Bahā'ī Covenant and secular community

development, the review of the Scriptures, other than those of the Bahā'ī Faith, will be cursory and will only be undertaken in order to ensure that a complete understanding is developed with regard to the nature of the religious covenant. The covenant will also be reviewed from a legal viewpoint in order to provide a bridge between religious and secular views on the covenant.

The third part of the thesis will concern itself with a detailed examination of the history, covenant and institutions of the Bahā'ī Faith. In this chapter, no attempt will be made to explain the practical day-to-day workings of the Bahā'ī community, rather, its theoretical and historical underpinnings will be studied to provide the understanding necessary for the fourth part of the thesis, namely, an explanation of the detailed operations of the development of a Bahā'ī community.

Summarizing the thesis, the fifth section will conclude with a comparison of the religious and secular approaches to community development and will seek to propose innovative approaches that may be of use to both religious and secular community developers alike. This section will also try to examine some of the weak points in both development systems and will attempt to propose ways of rectifying these problem areas if such solutions are able to be found. The experience of the author in both systems will provide the basis for this section.

1.5 Toward a Definition of Community Development

Because of the nature of the Bahā'ī Community which is the basis for this study of community development, and because of the nature of most religious communities, it is necessary that the perspective of community development taken here be as expansive as possible rather than one which is constrained to the notion of locale espoused by some community development sources. On one hand, religious communities can be seen as local in scope, affecting a clearly defined membership within a clearly defined geographic area. Taken in this sense, the religious community would, indeed, conform to the notion of the community described in the literature in which "primary group relationships" (Warren, 1973:468) are the mode of operation. The larger view of community, on the other hand, comprising a number of local chapters united by ideology on a global scale would not meet the "primary group relationships" criterion. Roberts (1979:26), though, points out that the geographical local community focus is unrealistic in more complex communities. Rather, community on this scale is best defined as "...the possession of common ends, norms or means." The Scripture of the religious community prescribing that the community, whether local or global, develop more or less simultaneously and equally in all its localities helps to qualify the religious community, in all its forms, as a community that meets commonly accepted secular community development criteria. It simply has more than one facet; it can

viewed at the cellular level or at the level of the organism, that is, at the local community level or at the super-community level.

Within this larger view of community, community development becomes a matter of plans, education and coordination rather than a project-centered activity. As Batten (1957:64) describes this process:

> "The goal is not so much to accomplish or realize communal projects which will improve the living conditions of the people, but to help them learn a way of living and working together which they may apply at any time to any problem which affects their communal life."

This view of the community development process is reinforced by Mezirow (1961:16) when he defines it as:

> "...a planned and organized effort to assist individuals to acquire the attitudes, skills and concepts required for their democratic participation in the effective solution of as wide a range of community improvment problems as possible in an order of priority determined by their increasing levels of competence."

That is not to say that the local and project-oriented forms of community development are not valid or important. Indeed, the local community project forms the basis for the development of the global community. The development of the local community, though, must needs have a slightly different emphasis since its focus is the cellular level rather than that of the entire organism. Grasping the concept of the global community may be well nigh on impossible for the individual

viewing this global community through the haze of his own environment, namely, his own local community.

Ignoring the differences which may arise in the literature over the question of defining the community, certain commonalities occur in the academic descriptions of community development, whether local or global. From these common elements, one can deduce that there exists an implicit yet elusive view of community development that could possibly be accepted by a majority of various community development camps. The common elements which seem to exist in the literature are:

a) local control and/or action—The principle of local control or action is highlighted in a number of places in the literature. Biddle and Biddle (1965: 28) define community development as "...a social process by which human beings...gain some control over local aspects of a frustrating and changing world." Hynam (1968:193-199) envisions community development as "...the utilization...of a program of approaches and techniques which rely on local communities as units of action...". Dunham (1963: 141) localizes community development goals by defining them as the "...revitalization of existing forms of local government, and the transition toward effective local administration...". The UN European Seminar on Training for Community Develop-

ment (1962:8) saw community development as "...usually concerned with local communities because of the fact that the people living together in a locality have many and varied interests in common." Of significance to this element of community development is Warren's (1963:323) point that "...community development is distinguished by strengthening the horizontal pattern." Warren (1963:161-162) elaborates this description be defining the "...*horizontal pattern* as the structured and functional relation of its various social units and subsystems to each other." while he describes the "...*vertical* pattern as the structural and functional relation of its various social units and subsystems to extracommunity systems." In other words, horizontal equals local and vertical approximates global although with a strong hierarchical emphasis.

b) individual initiative and self help—One of the key concepts in community development literature, based upon the frequency of its appearance in various analyses, seems to be that of individual initiative and self help. In Community Development: A Handbook, the British Colonial Office (1966:2-3) refers to a definition of community development arrived at during the Ashbridge Conference on Social Development which states:

> "...community development is a movement designed to promote better living for the whole community with the active participation and on the initiative of the community."

Dunham (1963:141 and 1970:93) stresses the self-help aspect of community development, as does du Sautoy (1958:9). The UN (1962:8) definition noted that community development was, primarily, a "...complex of processes...made up of...the provision of technical and other services in ways in which encourage initiative, self-help and mutual help..." The UN document goes on to say that "the simple phrase "self-help"...lies near to the heart of the matter in Community Development...".

c) <u>democratic citizen participation</u>—A concomitant to the concept of self-help in community development literature is the concept of democratic citizen participation. The Colonial Office (1966:2-3) includes in its definition of community development the phrase:

> "... a movement designed to promote better living...with active participation, and if possible, on the initiative of the community, but if this initiative is not forthcoming spontaneously, by the use of techniques for arousing and stimulating it in order to secure its active and enthusiastic response to the movement."

This statement would seem to imply that participa-

tion is very important, indeed, to the British version of community development. This notion is echoed by the Canadian Special Planning Secretariat (1965: 2), and to a certain extent by Dunham (1963:141 and 1970:140,171-174), Mezirow (1961:16), Miniclier (1956: 1) and others.

d) change, especially economic, social and educational— Development, as Roberts (1979:33-44) points out, implies change. Community development, therefore, must involve some type of change in the community. In community development (change) literature, the three most significant areas of action seem to be economic, social and educational. The Colonial Office (1966:2-3) includes in its definition of community development a whole range of activities, most of which fall within the above-named categories. The Special Planning Secretariat (1965:2) also includes these three categories by defining community development as "...an educational-motivational process designed to create conditions favorable to economic and social change..." Dunham (1970:172-174) says that "Community development is always concerned with bringing about social changes in the community." and further that "Community development involves an educational process.". Dunham also includes economic change as part of the process but with the pro-

viso that:

> "If the sole or basic goal of a project is a new road, a school building, better houses, the use of fertilizers, or the like, it is a project in community improvment and therefore not community development which is concerned with "what happens to the people while working toward their goal and as a result of its achievement"..." (1970:173)

Batten (1957:64) also espouses this notion by saying:

> "The goal is not so much to accomplish or realize communal projects...but to help them to learn a way of living and working together which they may apply at any time to any problems which affect their communal life."

Change, therefore, seems to be a key issue in community development as long as there is a solid base for changing the level of skills and the attitudes of the community and not only a physical improvement in the community.

e) based on local "felt-needs"—While the UN (1962:9) alludes to the "felt-needs" of the community, the main proponent of this aspect of the community development definition is Dunham (1963:141 and 1970:173). He states:

> "So far as possible, a community development program should be based on the "felt-needs", desires and aspirations of the community."

Roberts (1979:88-90), though, cautions in the interpretation that one applies to the term "felt-needs" since the term, in community development practice has often led to the needs as expressed by the community dutifully reflecting the expressed needs put forth by the community development worker, i.e., "latent needs" perceived by the worker as necessary "felt-needs", being taken as the community's real felt needs. The community development process is negated, in this instance, and, as Roberts states:

> "Thus 'latent' needs become 'felt'. It is an axiom in community development philosophy, and a crucial element in this philosophy is that the people must be permitted, even encouraged, to develop, no matter how gradually, their own awareness of what it is they need."

f) sustained effort—Dunham and Warren both see community development as a sustained effort rather than a finite project. As Dunham (1970:172-174) states: "Community development continues over a substantial period of time. It is not an *ad hoc* or "crash program." Warren (1963:324), in defining the community development process says that it is "...a deliberate and sustained attempt to strengthen the horizontal pattern of a community." It is not clear from other sources in the literature whether or not sustained effort is a key to qualify a program as community development.

g) planned—As Warren (1971:98-99) states:

> "Most of what is called "planned social change" is a relatively modest response to these larger changes which are taken as given and are not the result of concerted, deliberate, centralized decision-making."

By this statement, Warren means that change is ongoing in the community at many levels, one level of which is community development or planned change. What distinguishes community development, however, is that the changes that it induces—"the great change", as Warren describes it—are planned and organized rather than something which happens naturally in the community like birth and death. Because of its active involvement in the change process, community development can be said to be planned rather than accidental, even if the plan is only an implied plan and even if that plan exists only at the local level. Warren (1971:80) points out that:

> "development and planning, carry with them the connotation of a deliberate attempt to influence the course of events, with "development" implying the growth of some situation or condition as well as deliberate influence or control."

As can be seen from this review of community development literature, the "term is elusive, just as are the goals that community development efforts are designed to pursue." (Warren, 1971:75) The common elements reviewed here are by no means

common to all sources or accepted by all practitioners and theoreticians, however, there seems to be enough support for the intent of these elements if not their actual content to attempt to include all these elements in a definition of community development that reflects the broad base of community development expressed here.

For the purpose of this thesis, a definition of community development is crucial since community development is being compared as a unified whole to a similar process in religion, which is also being distilled down into a unified whole. Based on the elements presented in the foregoing pages, community development could be defined as a <u>sustained process</u>:

a) which seeks to induce change in the community toward
   1. greater local participation,
   2. greater levels of self-help and individual initiative,
   3. greater local autonomy, and
   4. improvements in the economic, social and educational condition of the participants, and

b) which follows a pre-determined plan which may have originated either at the local level or at a higher level but in which responsibility for achieving the goals and the direction of the activity are undertaken at the local level and which addresses the local "felt needs", and

c) which relies on the initiative of local people but may also use the resources of a change agent, preferably a member of the community, to stimulate, inform, educate and encourage local participation, and

d) in which movement is made toward strengthening the horizontal pattern of the community rather than the vertical pattern, i.e., strengthening connection and co-operation amongst local subsystems and reinforcing local authority, goal setting and decision-making.

While community development in practice may not reflect the definition developed above, perhaps one explanation for the difficulties presently being experienced in the field, the theories of academic community development certainly allow for such a liberty to be taken. It remains to be seen is this definition can withstand the rigors of religious development, with its clear plans and methods.

CHAPTER 2

THE COVENANT DEFINED

"And I will make my covenant between me and thee, and I will multiply thee exceedingly. ...As for me, behold my covenant is with thee, and thou shalt be a father of many nations."
(Genesis 17:2,4)

2.1 Introduction

As was pointed out in the previous chapter, community development has long had difficulty defining practical goals and methods. Warren (1971:75 and 80) stated this most clearly by stating that even though development implies some deliberate attempt to influence or control, community development, itself, is difficult to define, as are its goals and methods. In man's everyday life, in religious communities and, to a certain extent, in psychological and social work counselling, goal setting, decision making and methodology are quite clearly set out through the use of contracts, agreements, bargains, and the like. There are few who could claim never to have been affected, at some time or another in their lives, by the terms and rules of some contract or another. And yet, the review of the community development literature previously undertaken revealed that in theory, at least, contracts are not considered as part of community development theory and practice. This seems to indicate a singular lack of co-rel-

ation between the real world and theoretical community development. Because the contract does affect such a large portion of every man's life, it certainly warrants some examination in relation to the theory and practice of community development.

2.2 The Covenant in Law

Black (1979:327) equates contract and covenant in legal usage and defines these two terms thus:

> "An agreement or convention, or promise of two or more parties, by deed in writing, signed, and delivered, by which either of the parties pledges himself to the other that something is either done, or shall be done, or shall not be done, or stipulates for the truth of certain facts."

Fitzgerald (1977:202) while supporting this adds the proviso that common law permits a covenant, contract or agreement to be unwritten when it exists in the form of a bargain or compact between two parties. Both written covenants and unwritten bargains, then, would be enforceable under the law.

Covenants, *per se*, are mainly considered to be part of real estate law in practice since promises relating to the duties of the parties involved tend to be found in the exchange of goods and services. In the generalized form, though, covenants, agreements and contracts can be found in marriage and divorce, insurance, employment, the sale or

purchase of goods and services, the exchange of money, *et cetera*—in short, in almost every significant aspect of a person's life.

2.3 The Covenant in Clinical Psychology and Social Work

In recent years, clinical practitioners in psychology and social work have come to realize the importance of covenants in the practice of their art. The clients of these helping professions often misunderstand the nature of the therapeutic intervention and come to the practitioner with unrealistic expectations about what can and will be done for them in therapy sessions. In like manner, the therapist often has an unwritten, and often unexpressed, set of expectations of his own. The interaction of these two hidden sets of expectations can, and does, lead to a failure to achieve an effective resolution to the problems being dealt with in the therapeutic sessions.

As a means of overcoming this difficulty, clinicians in these two field have begun, in recent times, to model their practices after the experiences of their clients, namely, the use of contracts to clarify issues, expected outcomes, length of therapy and other matters involved in therapy. Initial results, as reported in Gurman and Kniskem (1981), Pincus and Minahan (1973), Turner (1971) and Compton and Galaway (1979), indicate that contracts have greatly improved the success-rate of what have hitherto been very imprecise thera-

peutic interventions in psychology and social work.

Maluccio and Marlow, quoted in Compton and Galaway (1979: 330), define the social service type of contract thus:

> "Webster's *Third New International Dictionary* defines contract as a "covenant", a "compact", or "an agreement between two or more persons to do or forbear something.". ...For the purposes of social work, the contract may be defined as *the explicit agreement between the worker and the client concerning the target problems, the goals, and the strategies of social work intervention, and the roles and tasks of the participants.*"

In their article, these two authors are trying to extend the use of the contract to non-clinical areas of social work, namely the areas of community organization and community development, since, as they state:

> "The contract can contribute significantly to the positive outcome of social work services. In particular, it can bring focus and meaning to inherent values and principles implicit in social work and make the contracting parties more aware of them." (Compton and Galaway, 1979:334)

They go on to point out that:

> "It gives both practitioner and client a sense of immediate involvement and meaningful participation and signifies their mutual commitment and readiness to assume their responsibility."

Even though this infusion of contract usage is being made into theoretical social work, in practice, the use of contracts remains a clinical rather than a field practice—a fact that causes problems for field social workers just as it does for field community developers.

2.4 The Covenant in Religious Scripture

The religious covenant, unlike those commonly used in the practice of law and in the clinical helping professions, cannot always be clearly identified and interpreted. The reasons for this difficult state-of-affairs is threefold:

1. The religious covenant is usually intended to have effect over a very large number of people and is also expected to be in effect for centuries, sometimes, even for millenia. Because of this fact, religious covenants are often at least as complex as, if not more complex than, inter-nation treaties and agreements which regulate everything from trade to the development of international institutions.
2. Further complicating matters is the fact that the religious covenant is seldom clearly enunciated as a single, readily accessible document but is, rather, spread throughout the Scripture of the religious group in a series of exhortations, laws, philosophical statements and prescribed rites. The elements which make up a particular religious covenant in the Scriptures are seldom denoted as being part of a comprehensive agreement, a fact which has been the cause of many a religious dispute in the past.
3. Because of the complexity of the religious covenant, and because of its lengthy life, it is often subject to a great deal of interpretation by succeeding

> generations of adherents with the result that the original covenant often becomes mired in a plethora of confusing and even conflicting interpretations to the point that the original intent is sometimes lost. Countless schisms and sects have arisen in the various world religions because of disputes over the meaning of the various elements of the religious covenant.

Regardless of the above-listed difficulties, it must be acknowledged that the religious covenant has had a more profound effect upon the history of man than any other form of covenant, usually, for precisely the reasons outlined above as being difficulties in the use of religious covenants. The all-encompassing nature and longevity of the religious covenant have given it an advantage in the development of human culture that is unparallelled in the history of mankind. When one adds to definition of the religious covenant the fact that this instrument is seen by the adherents as coming directly from the Godhead, its power and effect are infinitely multiplied.

A review of the Scriptures of various world religions, though, does provide some insight into the nature of the religious covenant, as complex and as elusive as it is. While the study of the Scriptures of the various religions undertaken for this thesis was by no means exhaustive, the study, nonetheless, yielded some elements of the religious covenant

which, for the purpose of further defining the nature of this complex instrument, will be taken as being essential elements for a workable religious covenant. These elements are:

1. Direction from the Godhead regarding the succession of future prophets who are likely to update or significantly modify the present covenant under the aegis of the Godhead. This type of direction is crucial if the unity of the group is to be maintained. Under this type of direction, which usually delineates what the adherents are to look for in an authorized successor, the integrity of the covenant is maintained and is kept out of the realm of the community or of its members thus preventing alterations or unauthorized claims to prophethood which would perforce create a schism in the community. We see this covenant element in the Scriptures of many of the world's religious, for example:

Judaism - In the Old Testament books of: Daniel, Ezechiel, Isaiah, Malachi, Micah and Zechariah, to mention but a few, numerous references are made to a host of prophets who, following in the steps of Abraham, will renew and expand the Covenant of YHWH (God).

Zoroastrianism - Jackson (1928:286) cites from the Vendīdād, a Zoroastrian Holy Book the following passage in support of this covenant element:

"...from the regions of the dawn, will be born the victorious Saoshyant (Savior)...

the future redeemer of the world. His birth, like that of his two millenial predecessors' shall be from the seed of Zarathushtra (Zoroaster)."

The Zoroastrian Scripture, then, predicts at least three such successors.

Buddhism - Conze (1959:238) cites a Sanskrit text concerning the Mahayana Buddhists millenial expectations which says:

"Sariputra,...asked the Lord: 'Some time ago you have spoken to us of the future Buddha, who will lead the world at a future period, and who will bear the name of Maitreya...'".

This would seem to indicate that a future prophet is expected.

Hinduism - In various places in the Bhagavad-gītā, there are various references to the line of prophets who have come before and to those who will follow. In chapter 2:52, Krsna says:

"When thy mind leaves behind its dark forest of delusion, thou shalt go beyond the scriptures of times past and times still to come."

And in chapter 4:1-3, reference is made to a continued line of incarnations who will renew and update the "eternal Yoga" or path for right living.

Christianity - In the New Testament, the greater parts of Matthew 24, Luke 21, John 14 and Revelations are devoted to future prophets who will renew the Covenant of God. In John 14:16 we see:

> "And I will pray the Father and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever."
>
> It seems logical to assume that if another 'Comforter' will be sent that there have been 'Comforters' in the past and that Jesus was one of these.

Islām - In Surāh 3:75 of the Qur'ān, Muhammad says:

> "When God entered into the covenant with the prophets, he said. "This is the Book and the Wisdom which I give you. Hereafter shall a prophet come unto you to confirm the Scriptures already with you.""
>
> Rodwell (1971) compares this Surāh with Jewish tradition which believed that all the prophets, including those not yet born, were present when God revealed His Covenant to Moses on Mount Sinai. Muhammad says in Surāh 39:66-70 that another Book (Covenant) will appear and that past prophets will witness to the truth of the new Covenant.
>
> These specific references in Islāmic Scripture leave no question that the revelation of the Covenant is on-going and that it will continue into future times.

With each of the above-cited religions making specific references to the chain of prophethood which reveals, updates and continues the religious covenant, it would seem that this element is a significant part of the agreement or covenant between God and man.

2. Teachings which will raise the community's awareness of itself, its environment and its God. In order to serve as a useful community development tool, the religious covenant must not only reinforce the knowledge that was provided in previous editions of the covenant; it must also address itself to new issues facing a community which has developed considerably from the last agreement between itself and its God. The covenant should, therefore, provide new insights into social relations and organization, a deeper understanding of the Godhead and the community's relationship to It and some enlightenment on the historical aspects of the covenant. It is through these new insights that the community will develop a new Weltanschauung making this aspect of the covenant a very important one, indeed.

The study and reinforcement of this element would be a complete study in and of itself, well beyond the scope of the present study. Suffice it to say that if religion and its covenant has succeeded in developing viable communities, the agreement upon which these communities were based must have contained this crucial element. Each of the recognised religions of the world has a distinctive character and type of community, a distinctive world-view and systems which are quite different from any that have gone before. The development of such distinctive communities can only have occurred because there was an element in the covenant of each community which defined its separateness and new-

ness.

3. Direction concerning continued guidance and interpretation of the covenant from an authorized source until the covenant is renewed. The religious covenant is not considered as static but as organic and infinite by the adherents to its tenets. Because of the difficulties with religious covenants mentioned previously, though, the community usually finds it necessary to find some way to ensure that their covenant will be properly interpreted and will continue to grow and develop as the community grows and develops. If the the Godhead, through the prophet, has not eludicated the matter of authorized interpretation and expansion of the covenant, the community usually finds a way to create this element in their covenant and to legitimize the creation of this hitherto unauthorized element by linking it to sayings of the prophet or to traditions which surround the prophet since only the prophet can legitimately include this element in the covenant as the mouthpiece of God.

This element may take the form of a priesthood with the authority to interpret and expand upon the teachings of the covenant or it can be vested in a single person who, either as chief priest or as a direct descendent of the prophet, can claim specific priviledge in the task of interpreting and updating the covenant. In present-day Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and, to a certain extent, in Christianity and Islam the 'authorized interpreters' of the

covenant are the priests of the religion. In the history of some of these religions, though, we see certain institutions whose specific task was to carry out this task. In Judaism, the tribe of Levi was given the duty to protect and interpret religious law and the elements of the covenant; in Christianity, the Roman Church created the Papacy whose authority within that church as interpreter and expander of the covenant was unquestioned; in Islām, the Imāmate, the Caliphate and the Sultānate were all given this authority. The only problem with having the community create this element for itself, however well justified the move may be by Scriptural and traditional references, is that sooner or later the justifications will be questioned by some members of the community and sects and schisms will arise because of these disputes. Almost every religion is burdened with these splits in the unity of the community and most of the splits seem to have occurred around this very element of the covenant. It would seem, then, that it would be much preferred to have the prophet, himself, enunciate the role this element will play in the covenant rather than leaving it to the community to develop if the unity of the community is to be maintained and the effectiveness of the covenant ensured.

4. Definition of a true believer. A great deal of the solidarity of the religious community depends upon its notions regarding what constitutes a *bona fide* member of that community. This distinction can be achieved by perspective members through the performance of certain rituals,

such as: circumcision of men in Judaism and baptism in Christianity or through a simple declaration of faith in the prophet as the designated mouthpiece of God and in the teachings of the new or renewed covenant brought by that prophet. Whatever form the initiation into membership takes, it is important that the community know who is to be included in the development process of the covenant and who is not included and, therefore, open to conversion attempts.

5. Laws defining the relationship of the adherent to the Godhead. Just as the legal covenant provides for certain things to be done and certain other things to be refrained from doing in the relationship between the two or more parties to the covenant, so too the religious covenant prescribes certain behavior on the part of man in return for certain favors and benefits from God. The religious covenant contains an implicit statement that God will always fulfill His part in the covenant; the only question is whether or not man will fulfill his part in this covenant. In order to ascertain whether or not man's part is being fulfilled, the covenant must provide such benchmarks as are necessary so that the individual and the community can make this judgement and provide for corrections to the present course of events if that is necessary. God, it is expected, will make the final judgement on the issue and will fulfill His part of the agreement accordingly.

Basic to the covenant, of course, is man's willingness to

accept God for whom He says He is, that is, an all-powerful, all-controlling being capable of affecting the most minute events in the life of man and capable of rewarding or punishing—both on a temporal and on a spiritual level—man's activities. In Genesis 17:7, God says to Abram:

> "And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and to thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee,..."

thus setting out the basic premise of God's covenant with Abraham. Similar statements can be found in the Scriptures of other religions followed by a definition of what can and cannot be done by man once this premise has been accepted. The adherent to the covenant may be required to pray, sacrifice, perform certain rites and maintain a certain attitude toward God in fulfillment of his part of the covenant, while God, on his part may give the adherent knowledge, protection, increase, and an after-life in return for fulfillment of these duties. Whatever these various reciprocal duties are, they are usually very clearly set out in the Scriptures which relate to the covenant between God and man.

6. Laws defining the relationship amongst the adherents of the covenant. As in any community, the religious community needs certain rules governing the relationship of one community member to another if the stability and unity of the community is to be maintained. These rules not only allow community members to live in security and peace but also permit the community to mete out justice to members who threaten this

order. The rules governing community behavior may be as simple as Christ's ordinance to love one's neighbour or as detailed as the code of laws that one finds in Judaism, Islām and Zoroastrianism. This element, along with element #2 described on page 31, has a profound effect upon the development of the community since it defines the outside limits of behavior and community activity permissible under the covenant.

7. Institutions are created and defined. The institutions of the religious covenant are the structures through which the teachings are promulgated, through which the laws are enforced and through which the rituals which bind the members are observed. In their essence, the institutions are the organizational manifestation of the covenant in that they act as vehicles through which the adherent participates in the life of the community and through which he is socialized. Not all religious covenants contain specific instructions for the development and creation of the institutions of the community, but, whether or not the covenant covers this term, most religious communities have seen fit to establish institutions and justify their existence by referring to the Scriptures, sayings of the prophet or traditions associated with the prophet, just as was done to justify and legitimize the creation of an authorized interpreter described in element #3 on page 32. Included in the institutions of the community are: the prophet and his authorized interpreter, the priesthood needed to carry out the various rituals of the community,

the schools and educators needed to socialize and form the community, the jurists and bodies of law needed to regulate the operations of the community and any other system which relies on the Scripture for the difinition of its duties and prerogatives. As with the creation of an authorized interpreter by the community, though, the creation by the community of institutions which are not clearly identified by the prophet often leads to schisms and divisions within the community, a matter that is better resolved if the covenant clearly sets out which institutions are legitimate under its aegis.

8. Laws defining the relationship of the adherent to the institutions. In order for the institutions to be effective in their role as definers of the covenant, they must command the respect of the adherents. If these institutions were created as part of the covenant, their role in automatically defined and their sanctity preserved as long as the covenant is in force. Where the institutions are set up as an afterthought to the covenant by the community or its clergy, the institutions are only effective is the community accepts them as part of the covenant. As representatives of the covenant in the community, these institutions must also be seen by the community to be promoting the interests of the community and the covenant and not those of the members of the institutions is they are to be effective as development agents of the covenant and of the community.

9. Provision for dealing with breakers of the covenant.

While most communities have some method of punishing those who break the laws, this does not protect the covenant, itself, from those who blatantly and repeatedly try to undermine its effects, either by trying to change basic elements of the covenant with the proper authority from the Godhead, i.e., legitimate prophethood, or by declaring it false in whole or in part. Any individual who previously accepted the role of adherent of the covenant and who now attacks the covenant is, in effect, declaring himself to be outside the community and no longer an adherent of the covenant. The covenant must, therefore, include protective devices which will preclude this occurance. If such provisions are not part of the covenant, the community usually creates such provisions soon after the first incidence of an attack on the covenant of the community. These provisions may include: specific punishments such as those seen in the Inquisition of early Christianity or in present day Iran or may simply be a method of classifying and enforcing certain restrictions upon the offending parties, e.g., heretics. Regardless of the method used, the community usually finds some way of setting these infections apart from the body of the community and preventing further problems in this area. If, as has been mentioned in previous elements, the covenant has not specifically sanctioned this type of action of the part of the community or its institutions, and if the action is perceived as unjust by other members of the community a greater likelihood for schism and sectarianism exists than

if the covenant has this element clearly defined in its tenets.

2.5 Conclusion

The covenant, whether it be legal, clinical or religious has been shown to have certain benefits attached to its usage. These benefits include: a clearer understanding of the responsibilities between the contracting parties, a blueprint for action along with expected outcomes and time-lines for action and anticipated results, a method of controlling the activity or development of the elements of the covenant and a tool for analysing successful and unsuccessful attempts to develop the elements of the covenant. All these benefits make the use of covenants a particularly attractive community development tool seeing that community development is based so definitely on relationships in the pursuit of its goals.

Religion, of the three cases of covenants studied here, has by far the most experience with this development tool, legal covenants having arisen out of religious covenants and clinical covenants having arisen out of legal covenants. The strength of religious communities testifies to the effectiveness of this development tool—a fact that should not be overlooked when one is looking for more effective means for carrying out the goals and objectives of community development. The elements which seem to make up the religious covenant could easily be adapted to meet the needs of a secular com-

munity and, if the secular community were to be studied, would likely be found to exist, at least in part, in that setting.

CHAPTER 3

THE BAHĀ'Ī COVENANT IN THEORY

"I believe in the beloved community and in the spirit which makes it beloved, and in the communion of all who are, in will and in deed, its members. I see no such community as yet, but nonetheless my rule of life is: Act so as to hasten its coming."

(Royce in Warren 1973:467)

3.1 Introduction

The next two chapters of this thesis will examine a contemporary, growing religious community which bases its entire development plan upon its covenant. This case study will, through a detailed examination of the theory and method of this religious community, seek to arrive at a better understanding of the use of covenants as development tools so that this new understanding can later be applied to the development of secular communities.

In this chapter, the case study of the Bahā'Ī Faith will centre on the development of the various elements of its covenant from its Scriptures. The elements used to define this covenant will be the same elements previously described in Chapter 2 which were found to be common to most of the major religions extant. The Bahā'Ī Covenant is a complex and detailed organism which would be difficult to

fully comprehend without first looking at the historical roots of the religious community of which it is the base.

3.2 History of the Bahā'ī Faith

The Bahā'ī Faith has its roots in the Bābī Faith which arose in Shī'ite Muslim Persia, the present-day Iran, in 1844 A.D. The prophet of the Bābī Faith was one 'Ali-Muhammad, a descendant of the prophet of Islām, Muhammad. This man, called the Bāb*, came to prepare the way for the coming of a universal prophet who would fulfill the promise of all religions, i.e., the Kingdom of God on earth and to create an intermediate civilization that would bring men to the stage necessary for the acceptance of this universal prophet.

Within the six years that he ministered to his followers, the ranks of the believers in his cause grew from a mere handful to tens of thousands. In the land of its birth, Persia, the new religion set about, in an hostile environment, to create a community based upon the new, albeit shortlived covenant, knowing that this covenant would shortly be renewed by yet another prophet and for whose coming massive changes had to be made in the shape of the traditional Muslim community and of the world. By the time the Bāb was executed by the Muslim clergy in 1850, the Bābī Community was ready to accept

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*Bab means "Gate" referring to a Muslim tradition that the prophet who would follow Muhammad would be announced by a descendant of Muhammad who would himself be a prophet.

the responsibility of keeping the community development process alive until the prophesied coming of the next prophet in three years time.

Girded with the teachings of the Bāb, these men, women and children set about their task of renewing civilization and creating a setting that would befit the august personage of the promised universal prophet. These followers arose to reshape Qur'ānic Persia, regardless of the consequences to their lives and possessions. Shoghi Effendi (1944:102) unfolds this drama for us:

> "We behold, as we survey the episodes of this first act of a sublime drama, the figure of its Master Hero, the Bāb, arise meteor-like above the horizon of Shīrāz, traverse the sombre sky of Persia from south to north, decline with tragic swiftness, and perish in a blaze of glory. We see His satellites, a galaxy of God-intoxicated heroes, mount above that same horizon, irradiate that same incandescent light, burn themselves out with that self-same swiftness, and impart in their turn an added impetus to the steadily gathering momentum of God's nascent Faith."

The effects of such an undertaking could not but have a profound effect upon the nation which was the recipient of such a focus of attention. Steeped in Islāmic tradition, believing, as do most religious groups, that their Covenant was the final edition, the clerics and authorities saw in this movement a threat to their power and prestige and sought, through every means available to them, to eradicate, not only the followers and the Leader of this religion, but

also the very thought that such a reformation was possible. The avowed goal of these divines was to rid the country and the world of this threat. The pinnacle of this attempt was reached when the Bāb was sentenced to be executed for heresy in July 1850. Following this event, a blood-bath ensued in which thousands of the Bāb's followers were executed, tortured or dispossessed.

During this tragic period, there arose, from one of the noble families of Persia, one Mīrzā Husayn-'Alī, later called Bahā or Bahā'u'llāh*, who took up the cause of the Bāb, becoming the most renouned leader of that community after the Bāb. In the turmoil which followed the Bāb's death, Bahā'u'llāh was imprisoned by the Persian authorities. During the months of his imprisonment, Bahā'u'llāh is said to have received the glimmerings of a further development in the Covenant of God, previously elaborated by the prophets: Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Krsna, Christ, Muhammad and, most recently, the Bāb. It was 1853, the three years following the death of the Bāb earlier prophesied to the coming of the universal prophet and the further development of the Covenant of God was about to be undertaken by the universal prophet of God, Bahā'u'llāh. Shoghi Effendi (1944: 102) quotes Bahā'u'llāh's description of this momentous event in the development of the Bahā'ī Faith:

> "...I beheld a Maiden—the embodiment of

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*Bahā'u'llāh means "the Glory of God".

> the rememberance of the name of My Lord— ...Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer beings tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honored servants. Pointing her finger to My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth saying: "By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignity within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive.'"

For the Bābīs, later called Bahā'īs*, this was the continuation of the Covenant of the Bāb and the beginning of the new Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh.

Not being able to execute Bahā'u'llāh as they has the Bāb because of His influence in the royal court, the Persian clerics chose instead to exile Him to 'Irāq, then a province of the Ottoman Empire and far enough removed from Persia to completely negate His influence on the Bābī Community and His disruption of the Persian Empire and clergy. In Baghdād, His city of exile, Bahā'u'llāh quickly became the centre of the Bābī Community, and this community, rather than collapsing as had been intended instead grew and thrived, much to the consternation of both the Persian and the Ottoman Muslim clergymen. These began to exert pressure on the Ottoman Sultān to remove Bahā'u'llāh even further from any centres of influence. In 1863, this lobbying produced

*Bahā'īs mean "followers of Bahā".

the desired results. Bahā'u'llāh and His entourage were removed to Constantinople (Istanbul). Still the community flourished. Further exiles were arranged, first to Adrianople and finally to the prison city of 'Akkā, Palestine. During all these exiles, Bahā'u'llāh continues to expound His message of peace, unity, brotherhood and order. The Bahā'ī Community spread during the time of Bahā'u'llāh from the Persian Empire to the Ottoman Empire and thence to the Middle East, Asia and parts of Africa. Later, during the ministry of Bahā'u'llāh's son, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, appointed by Him as His successor and the interpreter of the Scripture, the Community expanded to Europe and to North and South America.

Bahā'u'llāh's exile and imprisonment continued until His death in 1892. His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, continued with the development of the community, even though he remained incarcerated in the prison city of 'Akkā until his release following the Young Turks Uprising in 1908. Following his release, 'Abdu'l-Bahā visited Bahā'ī communities in Europe, Egypt and North America and set in motion the administrative order decreed by the Covenant of his Father.

When 'Abdu'l-Bahā died in 1921, he left Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Faith. Under Shoghi Effendi, the Bahā'ī Faith developed toward the ideals set out in the Covenant promulgated by Bahā'u'llāh and began, in earnest, to reshape community life and to set a new pattern for development. Ap-

pendix I presents an outline of the main teachings of the Bahā'ī Faith and a statistical table of its growth since the time of the Guardian, Shoghi Effendi.

3.3 The Bahā'ī Covenant - The Path of Development

Because of the nature of the previous Covenant, namely that of the Bāb, the Bahā'ī Faith recognises not one, but two prophet-founders: the Bāb as forerunner and Bahā'u'llāh as the prophet of God for today. The teachings of the Bāb, though meant to be applicable for centuries to come, hinged upon the approval of "Him Whom God shall make manifest", i.e., Bahā'u'llāh. Balyuzi (1970:39) states that:

> "The Bāb had made it unequivocally clear that the primary purpose of His Mission was to herald the advent of 'Him Whom God shall manifest'. The worth of every man and everything, including His own Book, the *Bayān*, a Book which Bahā'u'llāh characterized as the 'Mother Book', He had made dependent upon approval by the Manifestation of God Who was to come after Him. 'The *Bayān* and whosoever is therein,' He had written, 'revolve round the sayings of "Him Whom God shall make manifest"...'"

With the appearance of Bahā'u'llāh, some of the teachings and laws of the Bāb were abrogated while others were simply incorporated into the Bahā'ī schema. Apart from the fact that many of the Bābī teachings are included in the Faith, the Bāb, Himself, is also given a special place in the Covenant as the protector of the administrative institutions and the spiritual force behind their development. 'Abdu'l-Bahā, cited by Shoghi Effendi (1953:87), asserts that this

is the assigned role of the Bāb in the Bahā'ī Faith:

> "The sacred and youthful Branch, the Guardian of the Cause of God, as well as the Universal House of Justice to be universally elected and established, are both under the care and protection of the Abhā Beauty*, and under the care and unerring guidance of the Exalted One (The Bāb) (may my life be offered up for them both). Whatsoever they decide is of God."

The assignation of such a role to the Bāb has many spiritual and temporal ramifications for Bahā'īs, in that they recognise in the Bāb, not only an historical prophet of a past revelation, but also a prophet intimately involved with the unfolding of the present revelation. Even with these close ties between the two religions, the Bāb must also be acknowledged as a prophet in-His-own-right, with all the priviledes and authority that that entails. As Shoghi Effendi (1953:24) states:

> "That the Bāb, the inaugurator of the Bābī Dispensation is fully entitled to rank as one of the self-sufficient Manifestations of God, that He has been invested with sovereign power and authority, and exercises all the rights and prerogatives of independent Prophethood, is yet another fundamental verity which the Message of Bahā'u'llāh insistently proclaims and which its followers must uncompromisingly uphold. That He is not to be regarded merely as an inspired Precursor to the Bahā'ī Revelation..."

The Bahā'ī Covenant, then, while seen as a new Covenant, with new laws and new directions, also extends into the previous Covenant through its intimate relationship with

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* Abhā Beauty is a designation of Bahā'u'llāh.

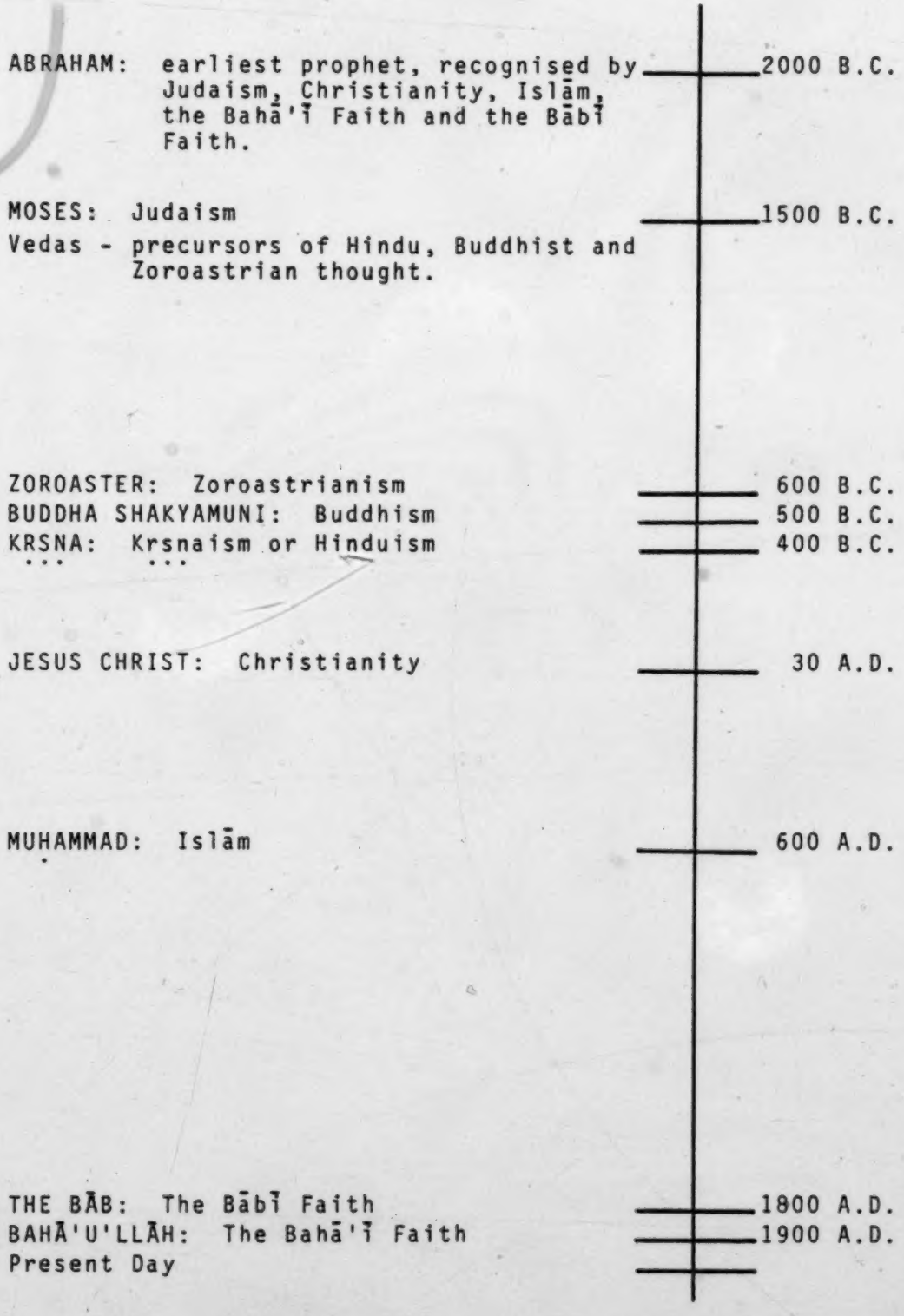
the Bāb.

In addition to this special relationship with the Covenant immediately preceeding its own Covenant, the Bahā'ī Faith also extends its connections to include connections with all past Covenants through its belief in progressive revelation, that is, a belief which asserts that there are no separate religions or Covenants in the Mind of God and that all religions and Covenants are simply a progressive extension of the development plan of God for mankind to succeeding ages of man. For Bahā'īs, then, what is being created by this new Covenant is not another in the many already existing religions of the world but a further development in the one religion of God. All past Covenants as well as the prophets of all these past Covenants are accepted as being part of one and the same message. (See Figure 1, p.50)

The connection the the Bahā'ī Covenant, then, not only extends into the past. It follows logically that if all religious Covenants are installments of a single Covenant then all future installments will also be connected to all previous Covenants. The present installment of the Covenant, being so central to the development of the Bahā'ī Faith and its community, must be examined in the context of all past Covenants to be fully understood.

In Genesis 17:1-9, we see one of the first references

FIGURE 1 - HISTORICAL PRESENTATION OF RELIGIONS



in the Scripture of an organized religion to an agreement between God and man. The main message of this agreement is that God covenants to become the driving force behind the development of civilization if man will but accept the messangers that He sends. With each new prophet, this ancient covenant is renewed, as in Christ's renewal of this ancient covenant in Hebrews 12:24. This part of the Covenant remains constant over time and is referred to, by Bahā'Īs, as the Greater Covenant. The Greater Covenant has three parts:

1. God's covenant with the one person whom He chooses to manifest His attributes on earth. This chosen prophet must agree to transmit to man the message that he will receive from God. The message is shaped by the prophet in such a way as to be understandable by mankind in its present stage of development.
2. God's covenant with mankind through the prophet regarding the succession of future prophets that will come after the present one. In this part, God promises mankind to continue sending guidance in a succession of prophets that will advance the knowledge of God and will advance civilization. Such a promise is usually couched in mystical language so as not to be clearly understood until the time is ripe for the coming of the new prophet.
3. God's message to mankind for today. This message

> is the one referred to in part 1 and is revealed to mankind through the agency of the present prophet. The social teachings and new spiritual directions which will be applicable to this installment of the Covenant, only, are given here. The social teachings of past revelations may be abrogated while the spiritual teachings continue as constants and are only further clarified or elaborated. Examples of the two types of teachings would be: the social teachings on marriage, divorce, dietary rules and rites and the spiritual teachings on the relationship of God to man and man to man.

In return for these divine promises, mankind must agree to accept each prophet that God sends, including the teachings he brings; it must strive to obey these teachings and create the requisite civilization and it must ardently await the coming of the future prophet and must accept him when he appears.

The second type of covenant referred to in the Bahā'ī Scriptures is the Lesser Covenant. In this covenant, between the prophet and mankind, the prophet outlines how the community is to be developed if it is to receive spiritual support, more especially, the prophet, in this covenant, appoints his chosen successor and authorized interpreter to continue in the development of the covenant until the coming of the next prophet. This covenant also provides specific details about the administrative set-up of the community and acts

as the "working paper" for the development of the community. Few, if any, other religions have this type of covenant included in their original design and many have, therefore, created one through inference from the Greater Covenant thereby providing a form of development plan for themselves—albeit, one developed almost simultaneously with the community.

The entire package, comprising the Greater and Lesser Covenants, represents an institution of the Bahā'ī Faith since it contains the development plan—the administrative order and social and spiritual teachings. Institutions, as it will be recalled, were earlier defined as organs of the community which embody the Covenant, which socialize the members of the community in Its precepts and which unify the community around one common cause. As their duty to this particular institution, then, Bahā'īs are enjoined, nay commanded to adhere to Its precepts so that the unity of the community is maintained and dissension and sectarianism are prevented.

> "Today the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences."*

The elements of this Covenant, if the above promise were to hold true, would represent very powerful community development tools in any community and therefore merit detailed examination.

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* 'Abdu'l-Bahā cited in The Covenant and Administration: A Compilation, Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969, p.25

3.31 The Promise of Future Prophets

If there has ever been any doubt in the minds of the adherents of past religions concerning the inevitability of the coming of future prophets who will renew the Covenant of God, such doubt certainly cannot exist in the Bahā'ī Faith. In numerous passages, the major figures of the Faith have made it indubitably clear that not one, but a host, of prophets will follow the coming of Bahā'u'llāh. As previously alluded to, the doctrine of progressive revelation precludes Bahā'īs ever thinking that the Covenant under which they live was the first one or that it will be the last. Bahā'u'llāh (1950:12-13), Himself, states as proof of His divine mission:

> "...all the Prophets of God, whenever made manifest unto the peoples of the world, have invariably foretold the coming of yet another Prophet after them, and have established such signs as would herald the advent of the future Dispensation."

In another writing, Bahā'u'llāh (1952:74) affirms His earlier statement by saying:

> "These Mirrors* will everlastingly succeed each other, and will continue to reflect the light of the Ancient of Days†. They that reflect their glory will, in like manner, continue to exist for evermore, for the Grace of God can never cease from flowing. This is a truth that none can disprove."

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* refers to the Prophets of God who reflect His attributes to man.

† refers to God.

As to the coming of a prophet after Him, Bahā'u'llāh gives some clear directions while others are couched in mystic terms for 'decoding' at some future appropriate time. The clear directions concern false claimants to the station of prophethood. Bahā'u'llāh, cited by Shoghi Effendi (1955: 132) clearly declares:

> "Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation from God ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying imposter."

This statement is followed by Bahā'u'llāh's definition of "one thousand years" to ensure that there is absolutely no misunderstanding:

> "Should a man appear ere the lapse of a full thousand years—each year consisting of twelve months according to the Qur'ān, and of nineteen months of nineteen days each according to the Bayān—and if such a man reveal to your eyes all the signs of God, unhesitatingly reject him!"

For the adherents of the Bahā'ī Faith, then, the path is clear for at least the next one thousand years and all efforts are to be devoted to the development of the community according to the Covenant, for the present, and only when the thousand-year period approaches will any effort be devoted to seeking the next prophet.

Even though there will be future prophets after Bahā'u'llāh, He states that, because mankind was unable to support the full impact of His Revelation, the the Covenant will be developed by other major Prophets operating under His influence over

the next 500,000 years (Bahā'u'llāh cited in Shoghi Effendi 1955:102). Bahā'u'llāh's (op.cit.:104) implication seems to be that mankind neglected to fulfill previous Covenants and must now undertake yesterday's work along with today's work:

> "The generality of mankind is still immature. Had it acquired sufficient capacity We would have bestowed upon it so great a measure of Our knowledge that all who dwell on earth and in heaven would have found themselves, by virtue of the grace streaming from Our pen, completely independent of all knowledge save knowledge of God, and would have been securely established upon the throne of abiding tranquility."

3.32 Teachings for an Ever-Advancing Civilization

Because of the detailed teachings available in the Bahā'ī Scriptures regarding the advancement of civilization and the great number of different facets covered in these teachings, it will be impossible to examine in much depth the fullness of the guidance given to the adherents for the establishment in due course, of a civilization based upon the principles of this Faith. Only the core principles and directives will be examined to give a general idea of what could be achieved if these principles are put into effect in the development of a community.

The teachings of Bahā'u'llāh for the advancement of civilization, though myriad, can be summarized by looking

at four main Tablets from which are derived key teachings known as the "Twelve Principles". These four Tablets, including: The Tablet of Tarāzāt, the Tablet of Tajalliyāt, the Glad Tidings and the Tablet of Ishraqāt, yield the following principles, each of which will later be examined in some detail:

1. the oneness of mankind,
2. the oneness of religion,
3. religion is the cause of unity,
4. religion and science must agree,
5. the equality of men and women and the education of women,
6. the independent investigation of truth,
7. the abolition of all forms of prejudice,
8. universal peace,
9. universal education, especially for children,
10. universal auxiliary language,
11. universal government, and
12. the spiritual solution to economic problems.

In addition to these focal principles, the Scriptures cover such principles as: the importance of learning the arts and the sciences, the importance of acquiring a trade or profession and the importance for everyone to work, the elevation of the exercise of work to the level of worship, the confirmation of the principles of reward and punishment as society's control mechanism, the prohibition of religious celebacy and confession, the rule of moderation in all things, the principle of the non-interference of religion in politics and of

obedience to government and the principle of majority rule. These principles, then, form the basis for the advancement of civilization envisioned by the Prophet of the Bahā'ī Faith, principles which alone, according to Bahā'u'llāh, have the power to bring the world to a high level of advancement.

Each of the major principles previously presented has, in itself, extensive ramifications in the development of the Bahā'ī Community. In order to understand the full impact of these principles, it is necessary to examine each one by itself along with the interpretations and explanations given in the Scriptures by the major figures of the Faith.

1. The oneness of mankind – In support of this principle, the Bahā'ī Scriptures point out that genetically all men are from the same stock and that, contrary to the oft resurected debate regarding the differences between races (Morgan and King, 1966:437-441), any differences that exist are only surface differences. On the spiritual level, these teachings assert, man is equal before God regardless of his temporal social status, sex, race or capacity. The differences created by nationality are, according to the Bahā'ī Writings, purely artificial differences created by man, himself, and have no relevance to spiritual principles or to physical reality.

If the oneness of mankind is indeed a fact, the logical extension of this principle to the adherents should be that

all men are considered as brothers, regardless of their race, creed, color, capacity or any of a plethora of other causes that keep people apart. The followers of Bahā'u'llāh, taking this principle to the limit, would consider all people as members of their family unit coming from one father, God. The only difference between people is the degree to which they know and feel comfortable with this larger family – a matter that is strictly logistical.

2. The oneness of religion – The logical extension of the above principle is the unity of the family of religion. If all men come from God, then all religion must also come from God and be related to each other in some way. This relationship between religions is confirmed in the Bahā'ī principle of progressive revelation, described on page 49, which states that as mankind's capacity for receiving new information of the development of civilization increases, the Covenant is augmented and elaborated according to this new capacity ('Abdu'l-Bahā, 1964:84-88). Regardless of the particular name applied to the followers of the religion of the day, the essential unity of the religion of God is still maintained.

3. Religion is the cause of unity – Following from the previous principle, if all religions emanate from a single source and are but continuations of a single message, then the religions should be united amongst themselves. Bahā'u'llāh is emphatic in declaring that if religion becomes the cause of discord and hatred, then it would be better if it did not

exist at all and that man return to the state of squalor from which God's message raised him.

4. Religion and science must agree – This principle is best described by 'Abdu'l-Bahā:

> "God has endowed man with intelligence and reason whereby he is required to determine the verity of questions and propositions. If religious beliefs and opinions are found contrary to the standards of science they are mere superstition and imaginations; for the antithesis of knowledge is ignorance, and the child of ignorance is superstition. Unquestionably there must be agreement between true religion and science. If a question be found contrary to reason, faith and belief in it are impossible and there is no outcome but wavering and vacillation."*

By this, though, is not meant that God and His Prophets can be put to a scientific test but merely that the teachings of religion must agree with the laws of nature, e.g., the flat earth policy of the early Catholic Church.

5. The equality of men and women and the education of women – The teachings of the Bahā'ī Faith stress equality of the sexes, not egality. In an equal partnership, the two sexes throughout the world of nature are capable of achieving their full capacity. Only in the world of man, the teachings state, does women receive an unequal chance to reach this capacity through lack of knowledge and through lack of recognition for equal achievements. If, as stated in the previously explained principles, all men are equal and brothers, then

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*Bahā'ī World Faith: Selected Writings of Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Baha, Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956, p.240.

it must also be true that the sexes are also equal and related. In order to counter the effects of centuries of deprivation, the Bahā'ī Writings ordain that women, since they are the educators of future generations, should be given precedence in acquiring education if a choice must be made between educating a man and a woman. Thus, the deficiency will be overcome and assurance will be given that such a deficiency will not occur in succeeding generations.

Even with this emphasis on equality, the Scriptures do not follow modern thinking which stresses egalitarianism between the sexes. Each of the sexes, especially in the raising and education of children, has a role and capacities that are specific to it. For example, women, according to the Bahā'ī teachings, will be the sex to bring peace in the world because of their refusal to allow their children to be killed in war ('Abdu'l-Bahā, 1921-25:130) after having spent an entire lifetime educating and raising these children. Their role, then, is to educate, raise and protect their children. Men, on the other hand, have the responsibility to see that their children are taught the arts and sciences (as opposed to education which includes morals, manners, *et cetera*) and are to be the cause of unity amongst the children. Even with these differences in role, mostly as a result of function not capacity, women are expected to achieve the same heights of knowledge and action that the men achieve.

6. The independent investigation of truth – In order to arrive at "truth", Bahā'u'llāh instructs mankind to investigate the matter ignoring the traditions and prejudices that previously caused a multiplicity of "truths" to exist with the resultant division. There can be no imitations of reality in the search for truth since truth is one. For each individual, then, the search after the truth must be one detached from others' opinions and with complete reliance upon the reasoning faculties given by God and upon God's guidance. This method of seeking the truth applies not only to the search for religious truth but to the search for temporal truth.

7. The abolition of all forms of prejudice – If, as the previously outlined principles state, all things are united, then there is no cause to look at differences as being things which separate men. Rather, they enrich society and allow for variations in experience. Since prejudice breeds disunity, enmity and war, it becomes an anathema to the world of Bahā'u'llāh and the society must make every effort to eradicate this blight by educating its citizens (since knowledge dispells fear and ignorance and therefore prejudice) and the individual must seek to arrive at the truth thereby ridding himself of any feelings of prejudice.

8. Universal Peace – As all the previous principles have proclaimed, unity in every facet of human life is the cornerstone of civilization. The Bahā'ī concept of peace hinges, not upon political treaties, although these would be welcomed, but rather upon the adherence of mankind to the spiritual

principles which will elevate man's consciousness to a level at which war and disunity would be impossible. In a compilation of talks given to various groups in the United States, 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1921-25:130) says:

> "Today the world of humanity is in need of international unity and conciliation. To establish these fundamental principles a propelling power is needed. It is self-evident that unity of the human world and the "Most Great Peace" cannot be accomplished through political power, for the political interests of nations are various and the politics of peoples are divergent and conflicting. They cannot be found through racial or patriotic power, for these are human powers, selfish and weak. The very nature of racial differences and patriotic prejudices prevents the realization of this unity and agreement. Therefore it is evidenced that the promotion of the oneness of the kingdom of humanity which is the essence of the teachings of all the manifestations of God is impossible except through the divine power and breaths of the Holy Spirit. Other powers are too weak and are incapable of accomplishing this."

9. Universal education, especially for children – The principle being enshrined here relates not so much to the acquisition of knowledge but to the acquisition of spiritual attributes. While all people, especially children are to be educated in arts and sciences to their fullest capacity, the Bahā'ī Writings continually stress that education consists not only of facts but of attitudes and behaviors. What is meant, then is the acquisition of an "Heavenly education" ('Abdu'l-Bahā, 1978:27) and the betterment of morals. Among the characteristics that the pupil is to be taught are: trustworthiness, knowledge, truth, the nobility of man,

steadfastness, morals and a host of other qualities – all destined to lead man into a state of harmony and unity.

10. Universal auxiliary language – Again, this principle is designed to cause unity amongst the peoples of the world. The goal is to have the leaders and peoples of the world choose a language that all will learn along with their mother tongue as a medium of international communication. This would have the effect of reducing misunderstandings and consequently, disunity.

11. Universal government – The Bahā'ī teachings propose that world governments establish a mechanism whereby questions of international importance can be dealt with effectively and quickly. The structure of the former League of Nations, 'Abdu'l-Bahā asserted in a letter to the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, 17 December 1919 cited by Holley (1956: 159-160, could not meet the requirement of being effective and efficient in dealing with the complex international problems that faced it because the League did not have the support of the entire world. The same would also hold true of the United Nations Organization, whose Security Council continually struggles with the question of peace without much success. The form of world government envisioned by this principle would therefore have to have the support of all nations and the power to enforce its decisions because of that support. Such a mechanism could only be set up by the people of the world and is not envisioned, by Bahā'īs, as part of any religious movement.

12. The spiritual solution to economic problems – Embodied in this principle is not a great plan to save the world from economic mismanagement and confusion. The basis of this and all principles is the establishment of unity in the community and throughout the world. In order to achieve this unity, Bahā'u'llāh teaches, there must be some form of economic redistribution of wealth from the rich to the poor without undue strain upon the rich who are being justly rewarded for their efforts. This could best be accomplished by the people themselves through a caring attitude toward their fellow man. Since the economic system is much more complex that just the matter of the redistribution of wealth, the other principles which come into play here must be considered. For example, one of the Bahā'ī principles is that everyone should have a trade or occupation and that work is a form of worship. The redistribution of wealth, then, would not seek to create a welfare system but to provide for those in society who are in need of help.

The principles which have been covered above are not general dicta on how the world should operate but rather are guidelines given to the Bahā'īs so that they, as part of the world of humanity, can supply energy and action to assist the world in achieving these goals. With the underlying principle of unity, Bahā'īs would have to examine all their actions in relation to this base. The goal of unity and a summary of these principles of the Faith are best expressed in this poetic passage by 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1942:27):

> "Behold how its [the unity of mankind]* light is now dawning upon the world's darkened horizon. The first candle is unity in the political realm, the early glimmerings of which can now be discerned. The second candle is unity of thought in world undertakings, the consummation of which will ere long be witnessed. The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass. The fourth candle is unity in religion which is the cornerstone of the foundation itself, and which, by the power of God, will be revealed in all its splendor. The fifth candle is unity of nations—a unity which in this century will be securely established, causing all the peoples of the world to regard themselves as citizens of one common fatherland. The sixth candle is unity of races, making all that dwell on earth peoples and kindreds of one race. The seventh candle is unity of language, i.e., the choice of a universal tongue in which all peoples will be instructed and converse."

3.33 The True Believer: Becoming a Community Member

Bahā'īs, like the adherents of most other faiths, are required to express their belief in the teachings and principles of Bahā'u'llāh before gaining admittance into the community. The beliefs that they are required to profess, according to Shoghi Effendi (1968:90), are:

> "Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner†, the Author‡, and the True Exemplar§ of the Bahā'ī Cause, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Bahā's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to whatsoever has been revealed by their

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* The brackets are mine.
† refers to the Bāb.
‡ refers to Bahā'u'llāh.
§ refers to 'Abdu'l-Bahā.

> Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's* sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahā'ī administration throughout the world..."

Once the potential member has professed his belief in these key points, the new member can achieve, according to Bahā'u'-llāh, a high spiritual station equal to that of the minor prophets of Israel†. In order to achieve this station, though, the professed believer must first show firmness in the Covenant‡, practice fellowship and love with his fellow believers§, and participate in the activities of the Faith by co-operating with the administrative bodies of the Faith‖.

It is the responsibility of the Local Spiritual Assembly to facilitate the admission of these new believers, that is, to meet and officially assure itself that the conditions outlined above are properly met. This institution (which will be examined later in this study) also assumes the responsibility, along with the rest of the community, for the socialization of the new member and his involvement in the community. Since a great many activities of the Bahā'ī community require that participating members be officially recognized, meeting with the Local Spiritual Assembly or its representatives to gain official recognition is an important function for new community members.

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* The Covenant and Administration: A Compilation, Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969, p. 22.
† loc. cit.
‡ loc. cit.
§ op. cit. p. 23.
‖ op. cit. p. 66.

3.34 Laws and Teachings regarding God and His Prophets

The Bahā'ī teachings regarding God are similar to those existing in other religions. In practice, the Bahā'ī view of God is closer to that held in Judaism or in Islām than to the view held by other major religions. The reason for this fact stems from the teachings which define God as being above all comprehension and knowledge, even to His Prophets. No Prophet, then, can ever be equated with God or even be considered as related to Him in some tangible way. In Bahā'u'llāh's words (Taherzadeh, 1974:1), God is:

> "...the unknowable Essence, the divine Being, ...immensely exalted beyond every human attribute, such as corporeal existence, ascent and descent, egress and regress...He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness."

The relationship between God and His Prophets is not one of union but, as previously pointed out (Bahā'u'llāh, 1952: 74), one of reflection.

If God is completely unknowable through the efforts of mere men, the only way that knowledge of Him can be gained is through His deigning to reveal something of Himself to mankind. This He does through the mediation of the prophets, styled "Manifestations of God" in the Bahā'ī Scriptures because of their role to manifest the attributes of God, as He permits, thereby educating mankind as to the true nature of God. These Manifestations are said to have three essences or stations, namely, a physical station, i.e., their body

and its existence which is temporary; a human station which consists of the immortal soul and, finally, a divine station which perfectly reflects, as a mirror reflects the sun, the attributes of God. This latter station is eternal and pre-existent, that is, it existed before the body and soul of the Manifestation were created.

The characteristics of these august personages, because of the divine station, are said to be perfection or essential sinlessness (versus acquired sinlessness of those striving toward perfection), essential infallibility (versus conferred infallibility given to those who are guided by God but are not Manifestations), and innate knowledge as a result of their divine station. Their role is to act as intermediary between God and man, providing material, human and spiritual education for the advancement of man's condition, i.e., of man's civilization. This description applies only to Manifestations or prophets who are the source of religion.

There are also other prophets, who do not bring religion but who simply warn or guide the people, e.g., the host of prophets in the Old Testament excluding Abraham and Moses. These minor prophets reflect the light of the previous Manifestation and are dependent upon them.

The teachings, laws and ordinances of Bahā'u'llāh which relate to God and His Manifestations and prophets place considerable emphasis on the immeasurable gulf between man and

God and places man in a subservient role in relation to the operation of His Will. As was pointed out earlier, the religious Covenant can never be thought as being an agreement between equals. In this agreement, God has all to give and needs nothing even though He chooses to accept man's paltry offerings in return for a product of immensely better quality. It can be surmised, however, that one of the major reasons for the success of Covenants as a means of community development in religious communities rests exactly on this understanding, that is, that the benefits of following the dictums of the Covenant are far superior to choosing to go one's own way.

3.35 The Individual and the Community in Scripture

The Bahā'ī Community is like a madrigal, a complex interplay between individual voices which results in an harmonious musical selection. On the one hand, the individual is required to focus a great deal of his energy toward his own spiritual progress and personal development while, on the other hand, this self-same individual is told that, in this day, the power of the Covenant lies, not with the individual but with the community or group. The individual Bahā'ī, then, must delicately balance between seeing that he is developing his own talents and seeing that the community is developing its talents. Like male and female, yin and yang, the individual and group aspects of the Bahā'ī community cannot exist one without the other and depend on each other

for fulfillment.

For the individual, there is also the dual aspect of spiritual and temporal development – each depending on the other for fulfillment and completion. The development of the temporal side of the individual has been partially covered in Section 3.32 of this chapter (pp. 56 et seqq.). The spiritual development of the individual, apart from the spiritual benefits derived from temporal development, are regulated by a set of individual laws and ordinances. These laws include:

1. the requirement that the individual pray at least once per day using the prayers prescribed for that purpose by the Prophet,
2. the requirement that the individual fast each year from sunrise to sunset during the last month of the Bahā'ī calendar, i.e., March 2 to March 21,
3. the requirement that the individual provide funds for the activities of the Faith and its institutions either in the form of voluntary donations or in the form of a tax,
4. the requirement that the individual refrain from the use of alcohol, opiates, narcotics and other non-prescription drugs (this obviously has a social component although the Writings clearly state that the soul can be damaged by the use of these substances), and

the requirement that the individual spend some time each day reading the Scriptures of the Faith.

In addition to these directives, the individual is also given numerous other suggestions for spiritual development, some of which include guidance concerning the spiritual and temporal relationship between the individual and the community.

In the Baha'i Teachings, the teaching of Muhammad, i.e., Islām or submission to the will of God, is continued and extended. Bahā'u'llāh, in Bahā'ī World Faith (p. 141), proclaims:

> "The essence of understanding is to testify to one's poverty, and submit to the Will of the Lord,..."

and extends this principle to the relationship between the individual and the community through its institutions:

> "...he must with moderation set forth the truth, and should any differences arise a majority of voices must prevail, and all must obey and submit to the majority."*

The submission of the individual to the will of the majority is not to be taken as a tyranny, but as a loving guidance provided to the community to ensure that unity is maintained. These institutions, representing the Covenant, have the obligation to keep the members of these bodies in touch with the individuals of the community through frequent interchanges between the institutions and the community. The members of the institutions are not to consider themselves as being

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* Principles of Bahā'ī Administration: A Compilation, London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1950, p.43.

in any way special, as Shoghi Effendi (1968:64) puts it:

> "They should never be led to suppose that they are the central ornaments of the Cause, intrinsically superior to others in capacity or in merit... They should approach their task with extreme humility..."

Along with the notion of the submission of the individual to the will of the majority, the principles of the community require that the individual be dealt with justly and that he be given every chance to express himself and to participate in community life. This complex balance between the individual and the group is outlined by Shoghi Effendi (loc. cit.) in the following manner:

> "Nothing short of the spirit of a true Bahā'ī can hope to reconcile the principles of mercy and justice, of freedom and submission, of the sanctity of the right of the individual and of self-surrender, of vigilance, discretion and prudence on the one hand, and fellowship, candor, and courage on the other."

The Bahā'ī Community, therefore, operates on the notion that, in becoming followers of Bahā'u'llāh, members chose to submit their will to spiritual principles that operate in a realm beyond their ken or control (Holley, 1956:78) and that these spiritual principles are embodied in the structure of the community, that is, in the administrative order of the Faith (its institutions) which unites the believers into one body through bonds of justice, mercy, freedom, submission, *et cetera*. The organic whole of the individuals, the institutions, the teachings of Bahā'u'llāh, and the continuing guidance of the spiritual realm constitute the community in Bahā'ī

terms, and just as the cells of one body can no more exist in isolation one from the other, neither can the components of the Bahā'ī Community be considered as units separate one from the other. Figure 2, page 75 outlines the Bahā'ī view of this continuum existing within the community.

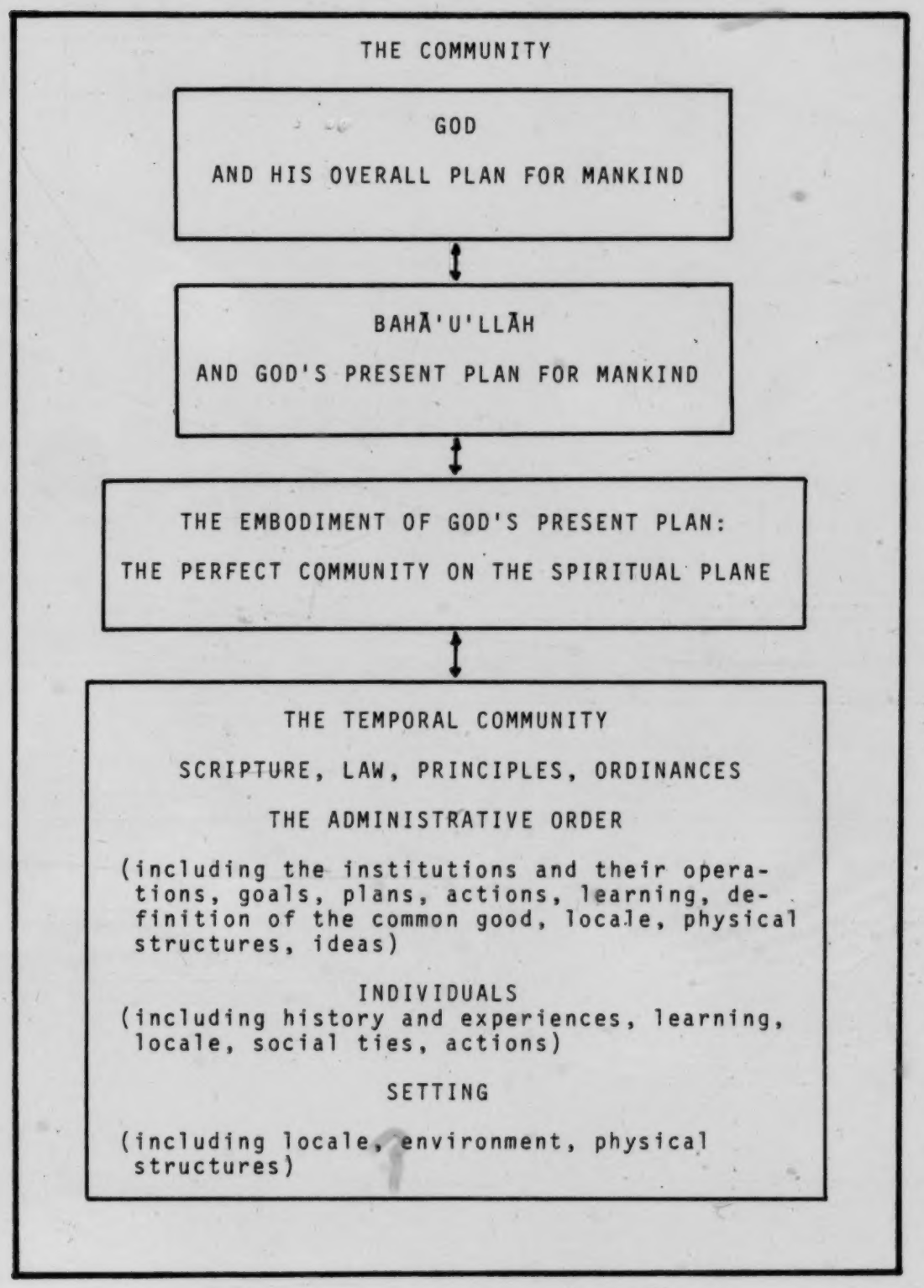
3.36 The Bahā'ī Institutions

Two things differentiate Bahā'ī Institutions from the institutions of past secular and religious communities, namely, that the institutions were created at the inception of the movement by its Author and not created at a later date by the community when a need arose and that these institutions are not simply embodiments of an unchanging dogma but that they are designed to react organically with future changes in the world as they occur, modifying their approach in response to these new developments. Horace Holley (op. cit.:77) explains these two differentiating factors. The first factor, namely, that the institutions were preordained, as clearly explained by Shoghi Effendi (Holley, loc. cit.):

> "This Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Baha'u'llah has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret of its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism..."

The second factor, namely, that the institutions be allowed

FIGURE 2 - ELEMENTS OF THE HOLISTIC BAHĀ'Ī COMMUNITY


THE COMMUNITY
GOD
AND HIS OVERALL PLAN FOR MANKIND
BAHĀ'U'LLĀH
AND GOD'S PRESENT PLAN FOR MANKIND
THE EMBODIMENT OF GOD'S PRESENT PLAN:
THE PERFECT COMMUNITY ON THE SPIRITUAL PLANE
THE TEMPORAL COMMUNITY
SCRIPTURE, LAW, PRINCIPLES, ORDINANCES
THE ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER
(including the institutions and their operations, goals, plans, actions, learning, definition of the common good, locale, physical structures, ideas)
INDIVIDUALS
(including history and experiences, learning, locale, social ties, actions)
SETTING
(including locale, environment, physical structures)

to adapt to the future, as alluded to in the previous passage, Holley explains, depends upon the Author passing on His power to selected institutions prior to His passing. The first conveyance of this power, according to Holley, was the passing of the authority to interpret and expand to 'Abdu'l-Bahā, and from thence to Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith who was given the power to interpret only. The second conveyance of this power was the passing of the authority to legislate to the elected institutions, the Houses of Justice. Since these conveyances are included in the Scriptural Utterances of the Prophet, their authority cannot be denied if the Covenant is to be upheld, and, consequently, the authority of the institutions carries the weight of the pronouncements of the Prophet, Himself. As a community development plan, the Bahā'ī administrative order carries the weight of a contract between the Prophet and the community and lends to that order a force that few development programs can match and a pervasive influence that can only be described as transcending the usual temporal basis of communities.

3.361 'Abdu'l-Bahā – The Centre of the Covenant

In order to give His blueprint for development more authority, Bahā'u'llāh classified the Covenant, itself, as an institution in the Bahā'ī Community. The effect of doing this, as pointed out by Shoghi Effendi (1944:237) was to "...direct and canalize these forces let loose by this Heaven-

sent process, and to insure their harmonious and continuous operation after His ascension...". The vehicle for the operation of this institution was chosen by Bahā'u'llāh, Himself, in a number of Writings including: The Tablet of the Branch, the Kitāb-i-'Ahd, the Kitāb-i-Aqdas and His Will and Testament. All of these Writings confirm Bahā'u'llāh's decision to appoint one figure to act as the Centre of His Covenant, the interpreter of His thought and Teachings. The person chosen by Bahā'u'llāh was His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahā.

> "When the sea of My Presence is exhausted and the Book of Origin hath reached its end, turn you unto him ('Abdu'l-Bahā) who is desired by God – he who is issued from this ancient Root."*

As part of the greater institution of the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, an institution in himself, was given the power to develop the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh by bringing into being the other administrative institutions alluded to in the Scriptures. Shoghi Effendi (1955:134) describes the station of this man-institution in terms of the characteristics ascribed to him in the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh:

> "He is, and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Bahā'u'llāh's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most exalted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring Interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Bahā'ī ideal, the incarnation of every Bahā'ī virtue, the Most Mighty Branch sprung from

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* Bahā'u'llāh quoted in Bahā'ī World Faith: Selected Writings of Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Baha, Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956, p. 209.

> the Ancient Root, the Limb of the Law of God, the Being 'round Whom all names revolve', the Mainspring of the Oneness of Humanity, the Ensign of the Most Great Peace, the Moon of the Central Orb of this most holy Dispensation — styles and titles that are implicit and find their truest, their highest and fairest expression in the magic name 'Abdu'l-Bahā*. He is, above and beyond these appelations, the 'Mystery of God' — an expression by which Bahā'u'llāh Himself has chosen to designate Him, and which, while it does not by any means justify us to assign to Him the station of Prophethood, indicates how in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha the incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized."

With this power given him by the Covenant, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, after the passing of the Author of the Faith, set about establishing the various institutions that would guide the community toward its ultimate goal of bringing about the unity, both spiritual and temporal, of mankind. These institutions, which will be examined later in this section, required that 'Abdu'l-Bahā, as the pivot of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh, provide, through interpretation of the Scripture and through his own example, directions which would enable these bodies to be brought into being and formed into the tools of development needed by the Covenant. In his writings and in talks given during his travels in various countries, 'Abdu'l-Bahā did, in fact, provide exactly this direct type of guidance and permitted the establishment of an administrative order that later ensured the unity of the community and the extension of the Covenant into the future, even after

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* 'Abdu'l-Bahā is an Arabic word signifying "Servant of Bahā".

his passing.

In his Will and Testament (1944), 'Abdu'l-Bahā defined and created the institution of the Guardianship as the interpreter and centre of the administrative order after his passing and appointed Shoghi Effendi as the first Guardian (p. 25); he outlined the role and nature of both the Universal House of Justice and the Secondary Houses of Justice (p. 20); he provided for the expansion of the role of the Hands of the Cause and defined their relationship to the Guardian (p. 12); he explained and enjoined the set-tax or Huqūqu'llāh for all adherents (p. 15) and he expounded upon the nature and rules for dealing with covenant-breakers (p.20). Promulgations of Universal Peace (1921-25), a series of lectures delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahā in America, elaborated further on the role and nature of the various Houses of Justice (pp. 295, 435, 451) and provided the operational rules for these bodies (p. 178); indicated the role of the Temples or Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in the community and further expounded upon the dangers of covenant-breaking (pp. 316-17, 375-80, 451-52).

Apart from providing for the administrative development of the community, these and countless other writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā provided guidance for the spiritual and social development of the community, covering such topics as: the evils of backbiting in the community, the need for moderation in all things, the limitation of armaments, the basis of justice, social and economic development, *et cetera*. When the writings

and interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahā are taken with those of the Prophet, Bahā'u'llāh, a formidable body of information and very clear guidance is made available for the institutions and individuals who are charged with developing the community according to the Covenant's ideals.

3.362 The Twin Administrative Institutions

In order to ensure that the community would continue to receive His guidance after His passing, Bahā'u'llāh created directly or alluded to in His Writings institutions which would work jointly to, on the one hand, interpret the existing directions provided in the Scripture to keep the community on the defined path, and, on the other hand, to legislate such ordinances as would guarantee that what was not provided for in the Scripture and was required for the adaptability and smooth operation of the community would be provided by institutions under His infallible guidance. These institutions were twinned so that one would provide encouragement, inspiration and information (the Institutions of the Learned) while the other would provide order, authority and legislation (the Institutions of the Rulers). In elucidating the roles of these matched set of institutions, The Universal House of Justice, in a compilation entitled The Institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors*, has this to say about these two administrative categories:

* The Institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, Thornhill: National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, 1974, p. 11.

> "In the Kitāb-i-Ahdi (the Book of His Covenant) Bahā'u'llāh wrote 'Blessed are the rulers and the learned in Al-Bahā' and referring to this very passage the beloved Guardian wrote on 4 November 1931:
> 'In this holy cycle the 'learned' are, on the one hand, the Hands of the Cause of God, and on the other, teachers and diffusers of His Teachings who do not rank as Hands, but who have attained an eminent position in the teaching work. As to the 'rulers' they refer to the members of the Local, National and International Houses of Justice...'"

The paramount institutions of these two categories, having the supreme, infallible power to interpret and legislate, are the Guardianship of the Cause of God for the Institutions of the Learned and the Universal House of Justice for the Institutions of the Rulers. In the former, the power to interpret resides but no power to legislate while in the latter, the power to legislate resides but no power to interpret, These two top institutions are linked together permanently by having as chairman of the Universal House of Justice, the Guardian and by making it necessary for the Universal House of Justice to ratify the appointment of any new Guardian. The individual duties of these two institutions must be examined further if one is to fully understand the implications of the Covenant's development blueprint.

3.3621 <u>The Institutions of the Learned – The Guardianship and its Subsidiary Institutions</u>: The continuity of divine guidance to the community, assured by the Author of the Faith and residing in 'Abdu'l-Bahā after His passing, was extended, after the passing of the Centre of the Covenant through the Institution of the Guardianship. This Institution, alluded

to by Bahā'u'llāh in the Kitāb-i-Aqdas, His Book of Laws, was brought into being by 'Abdu'l-Bahā in his Will and Testament. In that document, 'Abdu'l-Bahā appointed his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to succeed as the interpreter of the Scripture. As 'Abdu'l-Bahā (Shoghi Effendi, 1955:149) describes the Guardian:

> "He is the Interpreter of the Word of God... After him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants...The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the Guardian of the Cause of God...It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice... the Hands of the Cause of God, to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the Guardian of the Cause of God."

The role of the Guardian, according to the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi was different from that of the Centre of the Covenant in that the Guardian was never expected to be the perfect Exemplar of the ideals of the Faith or capable of adding to the body of knowledge of the Scriptures. The only similarity between the two Institutions was the power to interpret the Writings in an authoritive manner. The powers of the Guardian, acting within his sphere of influence as interpreter of the Scripture, was considered infallible and, therefore, left no room for doubt or dissension. To no one else was to power to interpret given, not even to the Universal House of Justice. In order for the community to be assured of a continuous flow of divine guidance, then, it became necessary for the community to turn to the Guardian whenever there was any question concerning the revealed Covenant.

At the time of Shoghi Effendi's appointment as Guardian the community was not sufficiently developed to have brought the Universal House of Justice into being. A further duty was therefore added to the Institution of the Guardianship, namely, the creation of the necessary conditions for the election, as prescribed in the Kitāb-i-Aqdas, of this supreme body of the Institutions of the Rulers. The Guardian, then, was required to also provide for the development of the community, without the benefit of the legislative function of the Universal House of Justice, so that the prerequisites for the election of this Institution could take place.

The Institution of the Guardianship includes not only the person of the Guardian but also the writings and interpretations of successive Guardians, these writings being the body of infallible knowledge which supplements the Covenant. This Institution combines the spiritual and social realms of the Faith (Holley, 1956:83) and can exist independent of, though in a much reduced form, the person appointed to hold the position of Guardian. The interpretations, once made, cannot be changed by later Guardians since that would represent a failing of the divine guidance promised in the Covenant to the infallible source of interpretive guidance. In the text of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1944:12) indicated that the divine guidance given the Guardian extended to include his choosing a successor from amongst his lineal descendants, provided that this choice was made during the lifetime of the Guardian.

The Guardian, Shoghi Effendi, failed to appoint a successor during his lifetime leaving only the body of his writings to represent the Guardianship. With no living person to fill this Institution, no further interpretations of the Scripture could be made and the community had to rely on the existing body of writings of the Guardian and on the direction of the Universal House of Justice who, while not having the power to interpret, could legislate on new issues and could elucidate the existing Writings and interpretations. The Guardianship's function as head of the Institutions of the Learned was assumed by the Universal House of Justice, assuring continued guidance for the subsidiary Institutions of the Guardianship.

3.36211 The Hands of the Cause of God: The Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God originated with Bahā'u'llāh who appointed the first members to this Institution. Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahā appointed more members to this body. Hands of the Cause, in Bahā'u'llāh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahā's time, though, were appointed posthumously or were appointed for meritorious service in the propagation of the Faith and were not assigned any specific duties. The role of this Institution was not completely developed or put into effect until the time of the Guardian who appointed the largest contingent of members to the Institution of the Hands. As defined by 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1944:12), the Hands of the Cause were to be appointed by the Guardian of the Cause, alone, and were to be responsible to him. Their duties were to propagate the Teachings of Bahā'u'-

llāh, to edify the souls of men, to be living examples (although not perfect) of the principles of the Faith, to assist the Guardian in his work and to ratify the Guardian's choice of a successor. In the Guardian's time, the Hands of the Cause were also charged with the protection of the Faith and the expulsion, under his direction, of covenant-breakers. This latter duty continues although the decision of the Hands regarding covenant-breakers must be referred to the Universal House of Justice for ratification.

The Hands selected from amongst their number nine to work at the Bahā'ī World Centre in Haifa, Israel assisting the Guardian with his work. Those not occupied on this council were assigned territories, usually on a global scale, where they worked with the elected bodies of the Faith as community development consultants, providing inspiration and encouragement to these bodies and to individuals, transmitting messages from the World Centre or representing the Guardian at various functions, suggesting improvements and innovations in the plans and administration of the Faith and guiding adherents who were deviating from the Covenant back to the original blueprint of Bahā'u'llāh. In their work with individuals and Institutions, the Hands of the Cause had no authority, not being part of the elected 'Rulers', and therefore relied upon creating a loving and gentle relationship with the community, much like one would experience with a grandparent.

In the time of the Guardian, Hands were permitted to

stand for election to administrative bodies, but, as their workload increased and as the Faith grew, this became impossible and unnecessary. Hands of the Cause are no longer eligible for election to any of the Institutions of the Rulers. This has helped to create a clear distinction between the supportive role of the Institutions of the Learned and the authority of the Institutions of the Rulers.

As previously stated, only the Guardian had the power to appoint Hands of the Cause, and, when no successor was appointed to the Institution of the Guardianship, it became apparent that no further Hands could be appointed. While the Guardianship did not rely on having a person in this role to maintain its existence and usefulness, The Institution of the Hands of the Cause could not exist without able bodies to assume the duties of the Institution. Another route would have to be devised, then, by the Universal House of Justice to fulfill these duties.

3.36212 The Continental Boards of Counsellors: Since the Universal House of Justice could not appoint new Hands of the Cause, and since the function of this Institution was deemed essential to the development of the Faith according to the Scriptures and according to the Universal House of Justice, this latter body created the Institution of the Continental Boards of Counsellors to assume most of the duties of the Hands of the Cause. The Counsellors, being appointees of the Univer-

sal House of Justice, were responsible to that body and, unlike the Hands of the Cause who were normally appointed for life, were appointed for five year terms. The Boards, consisting of any number of Counsellors designated by the Universal House of Justice, were responsible for the protection and propagation work of Bahā'ī communities in several continental divisions around the globe.

In the message announcing the creation of this Institution, the Universal House of Justice (1981:3 et seqq.) indicated that the Counsellors belonged to an Institution which was an extension of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause of God and would therefore work closely with members of the latter Institution. The duties assigned to the Hands were gradually passed on to the Counsellors, including the role of being community development consultants to specific communities and administrative bodies. Instead, they were freed to act as roving consultants and trouble-shooters.

Counsellors, like the Hands, are not allowed to stand for election to an administrative body of the Faith during their term of appointment. They must also, except in certain clearly defined circumstances later to be covered, be residents of the continent wherein they are members of the Board. Their function as Counsellors does not extend beyond the boundaries of their designated territory. Each Counsellor acts both individually and as part of the Board but is responsible to the Universal House of Justice alone for his actions.

3.36213 The Auxiliary Boards: The Institution of the Auxiliary Boards was created by the Guardian to assist the Hands of the Cause in their functions of propagation and protection. The appointment of members to this Institution was effected through the Hands, themselves, and members were to be residents of the area in which they served. The appointment was usually made for a finite period and, like the Counsellors, Auxiliary Board Members could terminate their appointment at any time by resigning. With the creation of the Continental Boards of Counsellors, the supervision of the Auxiliary Board Members was turned over from the Hands to the Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members now report to the Counsellors.

Auxiliary Board Members act mainly as individuals and not as a group. Their role is to act as community development consultants to local communities and regions rather than to national communities and continents as is the case with the Counsellors. The Boards were eventually separated into Protection Boards and Propagation Boards as the workload increased with an Auxiliary Board Member from each Board present in one service area.

In order to ensure that the duties of this Institution were properly carried out, the Universal House of Justice ruled that Auxiliary Board Members, while eligible for election to administrative bodies, must chose either to accept election or to remain an Auxiliary Board Member. This protects the members of this Institution from being assigned or from as-

suming any authority or privilege as a result of their position either as an Auxiliary Board Member or as an elected member of an administrative body.

3.36214 The International Teaching Centre: In 1973, the Universal House of Justice (1981:45) announced, as a further development to the Institutions of the Learned, the creation of an Institution to "bring to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provide for its extension into the future" as well as to provide links between the Boards of Counsellors, the Hands of the Cause and the Universal House of Justice. The duties assigned to this Institution by the Universal House of Justice (op. cit.:47) were:

> "To coordinate, stimulate and direct the activities of the Continental Boards of Counsellors and to act as liason between them and the Universal House of Justice.
> To be fully informed of the situation of the Cause in all parts of the world and to be able, from the background of this knowledge, to make reports and recommendations to the Universal House of Justice and give advice to the Continental Boards of Counsellors.
> To be alert to possibilities, both within and without the Bahá'í community, for the extension of the teaching work into receptive or needy areas, and to draw the attention of the Universal House of Justice and the Continental Boards of Counsellors to such possibilities, making recommendations for action.
> To determine and anticipate needs for literature, pioneers and travelling teachers and to work out teaching plans, both regional and global, for the approval of the Universal House of Justice."

Appointed to this Institution were all the remaining Hands

of the Cause and selected Counsellors (who were therefore released from the requirement of being resident in their area of service).

The creation of this Institution permitted a much more focussed attention on the work of the various levels of community development agents, i.e., Hands, Counsellors and Auxiliary Board Members, and placed in the hands of this specialized body a development planning function that had hitherto taken up a great deal of the time of governing administrative bodies. These were now free to focus on governing and on internal community development rather than on the gross development of the community-as-a-whole.

3.36215 The Assistants to Auxiliary Board Members: In the same year in which the International Teaching Centre was created, the Universal House of Justice added a development to the Institution of the Auxiliary Boards by calling for the appointment of Assistants to Auxiliary Board Members. These Assistants, appointed by the Auxiliary Board Member to serve one year terms, were to be assigned to carry out grassroots community development work in a small part of the Auxiliary Board Member's territory. While the specific duties of these Assistants was left to the various Continental Boards and to the appointing Auxiliary Board Member, the Universal House of Justice (op. cit.:54) detailed a general format of activities which would fall in the realm of these Assistants. These

duties are:

> "...to activate and encourage Local Spiritual Assemblies, to call the attention of Local Spiritual Assemblies to the importance of holding regular meetings, to encourage local communities to meet for the Nineteen Day Feasts and Holy Days, to help deepen their fellow-believers' understanding of the Teachings, and generally to assist the Auxiliary Board Members in the discharge of their duties."

Assistants were permitted to hold both elected office on an administrative body and appointed office in the Institution of the Learned. This allows for a crossover of ideas, methods and knowledge, at the grass-roots level, between the two arms of the administrative order of the Bahā'ī Faith, and, thereby, an enrichment of the development process where it is most needed.

As community workers, the Assistants to the Auxiliary Board Members, through their role as animators and educators on both a spiritual and temporal level, provide for the Institutions of the community a channel to reinforce their plans and activities, to explain and discuss their needs and goals and to gather information about the needs of the members and of the larger community. Being involved at this basic level of development, the Assistants are often in the best position to assess the state of the local community and of its members and either act directly or, by providing information for development agents at higher levels of the system, indirectly to bring about change in the community. The work of the Assistants falls neatly into the definitions of community development given on pages 20 and 21 of this study.

3.3622 The Institutions of the Rulers – The Universal House of Justice and its Subsidiary Institutions: Before the Universal House of Justice could be brought into being in the Bahā'ī Community, there had to be a sufficient number of National Spiritual Assemblies in the world developed enough to support the activity that would ensue following the election of this international supreme body (Shoghi Effendi, 1955:7). The Universal House of Justice, according to the provisions for its coming-into-being set by Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā, required that the members of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world directly elect the members of the supreme body. Until this was possible, then, a supreme elected governing body was unnecessary since infallible guidance was available through other Institutions.

Ordained by Bahā'u'llāh in His Book of Laws, the Kitāb-i-Aqdas, the Universal House of Justice was given by Him assurance of infallible divine guidance in its decisions, the power to legislate and to recind legislation on matters not covered by the Scriptures, supreme authority over all matters pertaining to the operation of the community and responsibility to God, alone, for its decisions – making it the supreme tribunal of the community. "Whatsoever they decide", 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1944:20) says in his Will and Testament, "has the same effect as the Text itself." As the supreme body of the Bahā'ī Community, the Universal House of Justice, from its seat in the World Centre in Haifa, Israel, directs the activities of all the elected and appointed Institutions throughout the world

providing development plans and goals as well as guidance and encouragement for Institutions and individuals alike. With the Institution of the Guardianship being vacant, the Universal House of Justice has also had to assume the administrative duties of this Institution, but is not able to assume the interpretive function of the Guardian. Instead, through a process of research and discussion, the Universal House of Justice attempts to elucidate what has already been written and interpreted thereby providing a more generalized guidance than would have been available under an appointed interpreter but, nonetheless, a form of guidance that is accepted by the community.

According to the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice, which is based upon Bahā'ī Scriptures, the Universal House of Justice is to be elected every five years at an International Convention by the assembled members of all the National Spiritual Assemblies of the world. Those elegible for election to this body include all Bahā'ī men who have attained the age of 21 years of age. The election is carried out, as are all Baha'i elections, by secret ballot of the delegates and by plurality vote rather than by nomination and majority vote. In this way, no division ensues in the community from competition between nominees during an election. The qualification of those elected to the Universal House of Justice, or to any other elected Bahā'ī Institution, are basically spiritual. As Shoghi Effendi (Universal House of Justice, 1970: pp. 5-6) points out:

> "...it is incumbent...to consider without the least trace of passion and prejudice, and irrespectice of any material consideration, the names of only those who can best combine the necessary qualities of unquestioned loyalty, of selfless devotion, of a well-trained mind, of recognised ability and mature experience."

The number of those elected, at present, is nine.

3.36221 National Spiritual Assemblies: In each country where numbers of Bahā'īs warrant, the Universal House of Justice directs the community members in that country to elect delegates from each region who will elect a body of nine, adult Bahā'īs from that country to become the National Spiritual Assembly. These Assemblies, elected annually during the Ridvān Festival at the end of April by delegates assembled at the National Convention by plurality vote, govern the affairs of the national community.

The National Assembly has jurisdiction over all matters relating to the operation of the community including: the supervision of Local Assemblies and believers, relations with other national communities, Institutions and the Universal House of Justice and the enactment of legislation pertaining to the operation of the national community. Unlike the Universal House of Justice, the decisions of the National Spiritual Assembly are not infallible. Because this body is considered by Bahā'īs to be a divinely appointed Institution, though, its decisions are obeyed and respected. As with all Bahā'ī elected Institutions, individual members have no power by

themselves and can only act with authority when convened into the Institution they represent.

The duties of these national bodies, according to Shoghi Effendi, are:

> "...to guard the integrity, coordinate the activities, and stimulate the life of the entire community,...to anxiously deliberate as how best to enable both individual believers and local Assemblies to fulfill their respective tasks. Through their repeated appeals, through their readiness to dispel all misunderstandings and remove all obstacles, through the example of their lives, and their unrelaxing vigilance, their high sense of justice, their humility, consecration and courage, they must demonstrate to those whom they represent their capacity to play their part in the progress of the Plan in which they, no less than the rest of the community, are involved."*

Just as the Universal House of Justice is charged with the responsibility for providing plans and guidance to the world community for the development of the community according to the Covenant, the National Assembly provides this same guidance to its national community, drawing resources from local communities and advice from the National Convention and from other Institutions of the Faith, to arrive at the plan best suited to its community for the achievement of the goals of development.

Styled as a Secondary House of Justice by 'Abdu'l-Bahā

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* Universal House of Justice, comp., The National Spiritual Assembly: An Institution of the Baha'i Administrative Order, Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1972, pp. 15-16.

(1944:14), National Spiritual Assemblies act as the final national arbiter in disputes between individuals or between local administrative bodies. As such, they also make the final decision in personal matters such as divorce, suspension of voting rights, admission into the community and formation of Local Assemblies. Under the guidance of this body, the community remains united and moves in a unified way toward the same goal according to the various national plans.

3.326222 Local Spiritual Assemblies: Each year, on the 21st of April, the first day of the Festival of Ridvān, Bahā'īs, in any locality where there are nine or more believers, gather to elect a Local Spiritual Assembly to govern the affairs of the Faith in thier locality. Elected by plurality vote, the nine members of this Institution fulfill the same function, on a local level, as do the Universal House of Justice at the world level and the National Spiritual Assemblies on the national level. These divinely appointed Institutions are not infallible but, according to the assurances of 'Abdu'l-Bahā (Shoghi Effendi, 1944:332), are under the protection of the Covenant.

> "These Spiritual Assemblies are aided by the Spirit of God. Their defender is 'Abdu'l-Bahā. Over them He spreadeth His Wings...These Spiritual Assemblies are shining lamps and heavenly gardens, from which the fragrances of holiness are diffused over all regions, and lights of knowledge are shed abroad over all created things. From the spirit of life streameth in every direction. They, indeed, are the potent sources of the pro-

> gress of man, at all times and under all conditions."

Destined to become Local Houses of Justice in the future (Shoghi Effendi, 1944:331), Spiritual Assemblies develop a much closer relationship with individuals than any other Institution since they are involved with personal functions such as acting as a spiritual parent, performing marriage and burial ceremonies, adjudicating local disputes and providing counselling to community members experiencing difficulties in either their personal or spiritual lives. It is also charged with the responsibility for some of the dependent Institutions which impact the greatest upon the lives of the local community member.

3.363 Dependent Institutions

There exists, in the Bahā'ī administrative order, a number of Institutions which do not have any appointed or elected members to represent them or whose function is limited to a specific time period or duty. These Institutions are dependent upon either appointed or elected Institutions for the fulfillment of their function. This does not detract in any way from their powers as Institutions in the community since their functions are quite clearly defined so as to distinguish them from the Institution administering them. The most significant of this type of Institution presently extant are examined here to provide a complete picture of the community and the Covenant.

3.3631 The Fund and the Ḥuqūqu'llāh: The operation of any community requires that funds be made available to the institutions of the community if anything is to be accomplished. In the Bahā'ī Community, two Institutions exist which provide funds for the activities of the Faith. These Institutions operate separately from secular taxation structures proposed by Bahā'u'llāh and are to be used solely for the development of the community and its spiritual system.

The Fund is an Institution which collects the voluntary donations of Bahā'īs. Money from the Fund is used to carry out Bahā'ī activities, to build Bahā'ī structures and to assist individuals, whether Bahā'ī or non-Bahā'ī as decided by the supervising Institution. Only Bahā'īs are permitted to give to the Fund and are encouraged to do so according to their means on a voluntary basis. Shoghi Effendi (1955:9) gives the following directions regarding contributions to this Institution:

> "I need not enlarge at the present moment upon what I have stated in the past, that contributions to the local and national Funds are of a purely voluntary character; that no coercion or solicitation of funds is to be tolerated in the Cause..."

Quoted in a compilation of the Universal House of Justice (1970:23), Shoghi Effendi explains why only Bahā'īs are permitted to contribute to the Fund:

> "Regarding Mr. ...'s bequest to the Temple: your Assembly should inform his widow that, because he was not a Bahā'ī, we cannot use his money for our purposes, as we consider our Faith and its institutions our free gift

> to humanity. You can however, and indeed should, accept it for charity and expend it in his name."

The Institution of the Fund, created by 'Abdu'l-Bahā, is presently divided into four main parts with other, temporary, Funds established for specific purposes as the need arises. The Local Fund is administered by the Local Spiritual Assembly who receives the donations of local community members, decides what portion is to be retained for local needs and distributes the remainder to the other Funds. The Local Assembly controls the budgetting and disbursement of the Local Fund according to the priotities set by it after considering the overall needs of the Faith. The National Fund is administered by the National Spiritual Assembly who is, likewise, solely responsible for the management and disbrusement of these funds. The Continental Fund, primarily for the activities of the Institutions of the Learned on each continent, is administered by the Continental Boards of Counsellors through a Trustee appointed for this purpose by the Universal House of Justice. The International Fund, administered by the Universal House of Justice, is used for the activities of the World Centre of the Faith and for the support of various impoverished Bahā'ī Communities around the world.

Bahā'īs can contrubute directly to any of these various Funds or can, through one of the specific Funds, earmark a portion of their donation for a specific purpose or Fund. The Institutions responsible for the various Funds report the act-

ivities of the Fund to the community and consult with it on the use of this resource.

The Huqūqu'llāh is another Institution which receives funds from the believers. The provisions for this Institution are not fully enforced yet but the general principles and purpose of the Institution are known by the community. In simple terms, the Huqūqu'llāh, or set-tax or "Right of God" is a tax that was to be used for the support of the activities of the Institution of the Guardianship, now vacant, and its subsidiaries. It was to be under the control of the Guardian but is now administered by the Universal House of Justice who uses the funds to support the activities of the Hands of the Cause and other Institutions of the Learned.

The method of calculating this tax, as explained by Bahā'u'llāh in the Kitāb-i-Aqdas, the Book of Laws, is based upon possessions, including profits, valued at an amount equal to or more than 66½ grams of gold (or about $1025. in 1983 Canadian dollars) upon which a tax of 19% is to be paid ($195.). This tax is paid only once and only when profits or possessions increase by this amount and after all debts have been paid. Certain categories of possessions are exempt from this tax, including one's principle residence. This tax, like the Fund, is a spiritual obligation and no temporal penalties have been set for non-payment. Since the tax has not been applied to the community at this early stage in its dev-

elopment, it is provided here more as an example of how the community supports or will support its activities rather than as a reality.

3.3632 The Mashriqu'l-Adhkār: The Institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār, or House of Worship, as defined by Bahā'u'llāh, is more than a temple or church. It is the centre of the community round which will be situated all the major Institutions of the community, including: the seat of the Local or National Spiritual Assembly, schools, hospitals, orphanages, homes for the aged and the infirm and travellers' hostels. All these services, any likely others as well, will be centered around the main edifice, namely the Temple or the "Dawning-Place of the Praise of God"*. Open to all people, and with certain pre-ordained characteristics defined by the Prophet, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār will, along with its dependencies, "afford relief to the suffering, sustenance to the poor, shelter to the wayfarer, solace to the bereaved, and education to the ignorant."† It will also be the location where the Scriptures will be read and chanted and where the individual will 'commune with God'.

This Institution is designed to act as both the spiritual and temporal centre of the community. It is intended to bring

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* A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitāb-i-Aqdas: the Most Holy Book of Baha'u'llah, Haifa: Baha'i World Centre, 1973, p. 61.
† loc. cit.

people and activities together into one locale and to give the community members a chance to learn about their Faith and their fellow community members. It also acts as a connection to other localities where a Mashriqu'l-Adhkār exists, a series of connecting spiritual centres, as it were. Finally, it acts as a showcase for the display of the workings of the Bahā'ī Community and its Teachings.

3.3633 The Ḥaẓīratu'l-Quds: The Ḥaẓīratu'l-Quds, the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, The National Spiritual Assembly or the Local Spiritual Assembly, is, for obvious reasons, the temporal hub of the community, just as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār is the spiritual hub. Here all activities of the community are given consideration, direction and support. The Centre, as it is commonly called, apart from the operations of the Institution which it houses, has a life of its own as a repository of documents, libraries and precious articles, as the centre of operations for committees, workers, and Institutions, as a meeting place for the community, *et cetera*. Because of the importance of such a centre to the community, the Ḥaẓīratu'l-Quds is given the status of Institution.

3.3634 Schools: Schools, Summer Schools, and Teaching Institutes fall under the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly. They are, according to the directives of the Guardian (Shoghi Effendi, 1950:52), created to:

> "...foster the spirit of fellowship in a distinctly Bahā'ī atmosphere, to

> afford the necessary training for Bahā'ī Teachers, and to provide facilities for the study of the history and teachings of the Faith, and for a better understanding of its relation to other religions and to human society in general."

The most common form of Bahā'ī School presently operated is the Summer School, however, the Guardian pointed out that, as the community grows, these will develop into schools and universities (Universal House of Justice, 1976:17). At present, the Schools function both as development centres for training Bahā'īs in the principles of community development and as educational centres for the study of practical applications for the spiritual principles which animate the community.

3.3635 Regional, National and International Conventions: As previously mentioned on page 92 et seqq., the Institution of the Convention operates only at the time of the election of the Local or National Spiritual Assemblies and the Universal House of Justice. During this time, the body of delegates, under the supervision of the Institution which is to be elected, gather together to first, elect the members of the Institution and second, to discuss with both the out-going and in-coming members of the Institution as a body the affairs of the Faith in the past and in the future and make recommendations on certain issues. These Institutions have, at the time of their functioning, their own elected officials who direct the proceedings and prepare the reports of these proceedings. On the local level, these conventions take the

form of Annual Meetings and the whole community, rather than elected delegates take part. At Regional Conventions, the whole community also takes part as there are no elected delegates until the community chooses them here. The International Convention is presently conducted by the Hands of the Cause rather than elected officials.

The purpose of these Institutions is to permit the individual members of the community, through their delegates, where applicable, to participate in the affairs of and goal-setting for, not only the local community, but the world community. At these Conventions, past plans are reviewed and analysed; goals for new plans are set and the needs of the community are expressed so that they can be considered by the relevant administrative body. Again, as in all Bahā'ī elections, neither the delegates nor the members elected to the administrative body in question are considered responsible to their electorate. Rather, the responsibility of elected members is to God alone and all attempts are made, either through prayer, consulting the Scriptures or through discussion amongst the elected members to arrive at a decision. Naturally, community members are consulted, but, because what is being developed is a divine world order and not a populist movement, the final decision must rest with the divinely ordained administrative Institutions of the Faith.

3.3636 The Nineteen-Day Feast: In the Bayān, the main Scripture of the Bābī Faith, the Bāb ordained that there should

be a new calendar to herald this new age. This ordinance was later confirmed by Bahā'u'llāh. The calendar (see Table 1, page 106) provided for nineteen months of nineteen days each. The first day of each month was set aside as the Nineteen-Day Feast. 'Abdu'l-Bahā, quoted by Shoghi Effendi (1950:52), states that the Nineteen-Day Feast:

> "...was inaugurated by the Bāb and ratified by Bahā'u'llāh in His Holy Book, the Aqdas, so that people may gather together and outwardly show fellowship and love, that the Divine mysteries may be disclosed."

The Feast, Shoghi Effendi (loc. cit) says, is to have three parts. First, a spiritual part in which the Writings of the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā are read, and prayers are said. Second, a consultative part in which the community members discuss, with the Local Spiritual Assembly, the affairs of the community and present ideas and suggestions to that Institution. Third, the material part, in which the members socialize together and entertain each other in a spirit of friendship and love. All members of the community, whether young or old, are expected to participate in all three parts of the Feast.

It is at these Feasts that the development of the character of the local community takes place. Just as children are socialized in the *milieu* of the family, the community is socialized at the Feast. Without a specific plan to guide its activities other than the outline presented above, the Feast is the tool of internal development, *par excellence*, of the community, as well as providing a vehicle wherein the

TABLE 1 — THE BAHĀ'Ī CALENDAR*

ANNIVERSARIES AND HOLY DAYS ON WHICH WORK IS SUSPENDED

The First Day of the Riḍvān Festival (the Declaration of Bahā'u'llāh's Mission as a Prophet) 21 April
The Ninth Day of Riḍvān 29 April
The Twelfth Day of Riḍvān 2 May
The Declaration of the Bāb's Mission as a Prophet 23 May
The Ascension of Bahā'u'llāh 29 May
The Martyrdom of the Bāb 9 July
The Birth of the Bāb 20 October
The Birth of Bahā'u'llāh 12 November
The Feast of Naw-Rūz (New Year) 21 March

NINETEEN-DAY FEASTS

Month	*Arabic Name*	*Translation*	*First Day*
1	Bahā	Splendor	March 21
2	Jalāl	Glory	April 9
3	Jamāl	Beauty	April 28
4	'Aẓamat	Grandeur	May 17
5	Nūr	Light	June 5
6	Raḥmat	Mercy	June 24
7	Kalimāt	Words	July 13
8	Kamāl	Perfection	August 1
9	Asmā'	Names	August 20
10	'Izzat	Might	September 8
11	Mashīyyat	Will	September 27
12	'Ilm	Knowledge	October 16
13	Qudrat	Power	November 4
14	Qawl	Speech	November 23
15	Masā'il	Questions	December 12
16	Sharaf	Honor	December 31
17	Sulṭān	Sovereignty	January 19
18	Mulk	Dominion	February 7
19	'Alā	Loftiness	March 2

OTHER ANNIVERSARIES

The Day of the Covenant 26 November
The Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahā 28 November
Ayyām-i-Hā (The Days of Hospitality, Intercalary Days in the Bahā'ī Calendar to bring the days to 365 per year inserted in the calendar before the last month from February 25-March 2 prior to the month of the Fast)

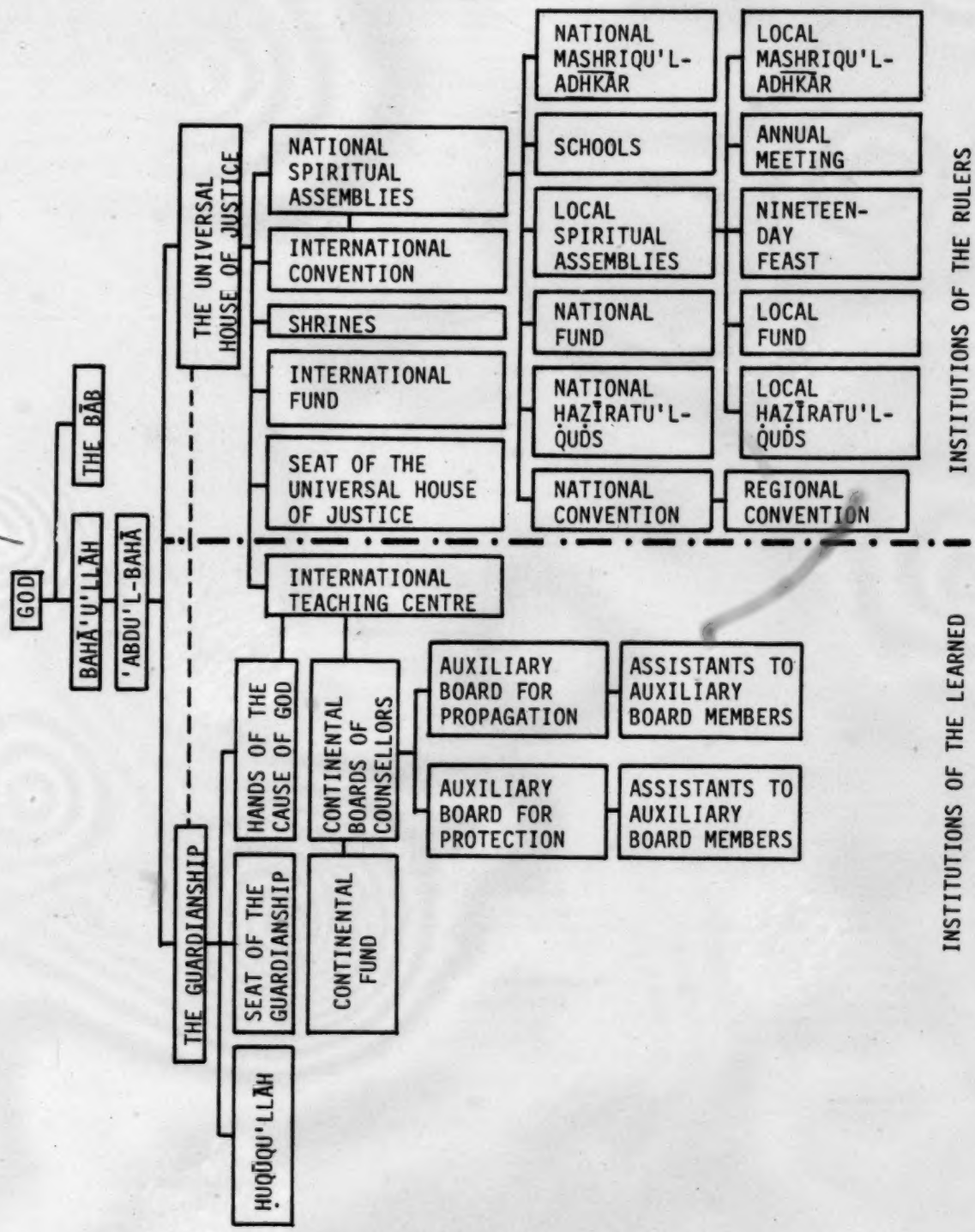
*Adapted from Principles of Bahā'ī Administration, pages 54-55.

adherents can participate directly in the governance of the community through its consultations with the Local Assembly.

3.3637 Publishing Trusts: Created by the Guardian, these Institutions reflect the Bahā'ī principle that only authenticated and authorized Writings of the Faith can be accepted as being authoritive. The control of the publication of such authorized materials rests with the Local or National Spiritual Assembly or with the Universal House of Justice, whichever has jurisdiction over the area or material being distributed. Apart from controlling Bahā'ī publications, the responsible Institutions are also charged with the translation, dissemination and publication of authenticated Bahā'ī Writings.

The Institutions of the Bahā'ī Covenant, as summarized in Figure 3, page 108, are many and their number will likely grow as new developments take place in the Faith. The depictions presented here can only present the simplest and most basic facets of these complicated organs of the community if some form of control is to be exerted on the amount of information to be examined in this study. Each of these Institutions, taken separately, would present a development model in and of itself when all the many aspects of these bodies were examined. Each Institution continues to evolve as the community grows and develops and future understandings about them will likely be quite different from present expectations. The Institutions, in their present form, though, do manage

FIGURE 3 - BAHĀ'Ī ADMINISTRATIVE INSTITUTIONS



to follow fairly closely the elements of a religious covenant as presented in Chapter 2. In a number of different approaches, Bahā'u'llāh has created a very clear and well-defined plan for the development of the community, and the Institutions, if they work according to their definitions, should be able to carry out this plan without difficulty. Only one element of a religious covenant has not been completely covered, namely, a way to protect this agreement. On this point as well, Bahā'u'llāh provided direction, in a way never before provided in religious covenants.

3.37 Protecting the Integrity of the Covenant

Having provided such a detailed Covenant, Bahā'u'llāh, to assure that His Covenant would maintain the unity and continued development of the community, provided detailed laws and instructions for dealing with those who would transgress the provisions of the Covenant. The transgressions involved in breaking the Covenant are:

1. acceptance of Bahā'u'llāh as a Prophet (which means accepting all the laws and Institutions ordained in His Covenant) and then attacking His Teachings, or laws, or the Prophet Himself as false.
2. attacking the central Institutions of the Faith imbued with infallibility by Bahā'u'llāh, namely, 'Abdul-Bahā, the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice.
3. personally interpreting the Teachings of Bahā'u'llāh and

then attempting to surround oneself with a school or sect based upon this new interpretation.

4. claiming to be the Prophet of God or the second Guardian.

Not included in this definition are cases of simple law-breaking, actions of non-believers against the Faith, and actions by a former believer who resigned from the Faith. The crime of Covenant-breaking is, according to the central Figures of the Faith, a process which takes place in the soul of a person over a long period of time during which he, for reasons of self-aggrandizement, cuts himself off from the grace of God and becomes lost in himself.* According to 'Abdu'l-Bahā, these people are aware of their crime:

> "These do not doubt the validity of the Covenant, but selfish motives have dragged them into this condition. It is not that they ignore what they do – they are perfectly aware and still exhibit opposition."*

In order to deal with this complex and confusing problem, Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā after Him instituted a series of measures that could be taken to prevent Covenant-breaking. If an individual becomes apprised of the Covenant-breaking efforts of another individual, it is his duty, in the Bahā'ī Faith, to report that violation to the appropriate Institution. The Institutions which have the specific duty to protect the

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* Faily, Jane, Peter Kahn and Douglas Martin, The Power of Covenant, Vol. 2, Thornhill: The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īs of Canada, 1976-77, p. 9.

Faith are: the Guardianship, the Hands of the Cause, the Continental Boards of Counsellors, the Auxiliary Board Members for Protection and their assistants, the Universal House of Justice, The National Spiritual Assemblies and the Local Spiritual Assemblies. Once this report has been made by the individual, he is to leave the matter in the hands of the Institution concerned since he does not have the authority to deal with the situation. Any of the above-named Institutions can take measures to protect the rest of the community but it falls to the Institutions of the Learned to investigate the matter, and, if just cause exists, to attempt to divert the violator from this error (Faily, Kahn and Martin, op. cit. pp 38-44).

In cases where the Institutions are unable to convince the individual to desist, a process begins that can only be reversed is the violating individual recants his erroneous doctrine.

> "Authority for the expulsion and reinstatement of Covenant-breakers remains with the Hands of the Cause of God. All such matters will be investigated locally by the relative Continental Board of Counsellors in consultation with any Hand or Hands who may be in the area. The Continental Board of Counsellors and the Hands concerned will then make their reports to the International Teaching Centre where they will be considered. The decision whether or not to expel or reinstate will be made by the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land who will, as at present, submit their decision to the Universal House of Justice for approval."*

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* loc. cit.

Once the decision is made to expel a member from the community as a Covenant-breaker, the community must, according to Bahā'ī law, shun the expelled person.

> "...one of the greatest and most fundamental principles of the Cause of God is to shun and avoid entirely the Covenant-breakers, for they will utterly destroy the Cause of God, exterminate His Law and render of no account all efforts exerted in the past."*

> "...one must protect and safeguard the blessed souls from the breaths and fatal spiritual diseases; otherwise violation, like the plague, will become a contagion and all will perish."†

Under these conditions, the community development plan, namely, the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh, is protected from within and from without from any disruption that could annul its goals and aims. The clarity with which the matter of Covenant-breaking is dealt with in the Scriptures cannot leave any doubt in the mind of the community members that the plan is not theirs to change and that they can be assured that the plan will be protected at all costs. Such direction should create a strong community when coupled with the other facets of the Covenant which have been discussed in this chapter.

3.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, an attempt has been made to show that the Bahā'ī Covenant, which fits the pattern described in Chapter 2 for religious covenants, also meets the criteria for

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* Faily et al, op. cit. p. 33
† Faily et al, op. cit. p. 34

being a community development plan as set out in the definitions of community development in Chapter 1. The Bahā'ī Covenant not only provides a general structure for the development of that community but also provides the method, the goals, the development workers and the rules for the development of a community so clearly defined that it can almost be visualized. While the model seems to be a well-developed one, seeing it in action is the logical next step for evaluating its effectiveness as a community development tool. While this study has, and will continue to examine only the internal development of the Bahā'ī Community, it should be born in mind as we begin to examine the actual workings of the Community that the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh does not only contain goals for the development of an enclosed religious community, but that it also has a vision for the world-at-large which affects who the community develops and how the community functions internally. The following quote from Shoghi Effendi (1955:40-41) should leave no question as to this vision:

> "Some form of a world Super-State must needs be evolved, in whose favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a World Parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a Supreme Tribunal whose judgement will have binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did

not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration. A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of Capital and Labor definitely recognized; in which the clamor or religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law – the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives – shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship – such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Bahā'u'llāh,..."

CHAPTER 4

THE BAHĀ'Ī COVENANT IN PRACTICE

"Today the most important affair is firmness in the Covenant, because firmness in the Covenant wards off differences."

('Abdu'l-Bahā)

4.1 Introduction

The structure of the Bahā'ī Covenant outlined in Chapter 3 represents only the model of the community as provided by Bahā'u'llāh and elaborated by 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi. Viewing such a model, though, often does not help to make the actual workings of the community clear, even after some extrapolation from the model has been made. In studying a community, the only truly effective way to understand the processes of that community is to examine the workings of the community itself. An examination of the present, actual workings of the Bahā'ī Community is necessary, then, if we are to discover whether or not the Bahā'ī Covenant actually provides the community development plan for its adherents, as postulated by this study, and if the plan provided by that Covenant is actually being followed. This chapter, then, will seek to elucidate for the reader some of the processes that make the Bahā'ī Community operational. The stress, though, must remain on <u>some</u> because of the complexity of the myriad process-

es which must needs exist in any community and which, because of their number and complexity, make it almost impossible to examine all of them in one manageable study.

Because of the paucity of research material on the Bahā'ī Community and its operations at the present time, the writer will be relying on personal experience, for the most part, in the description of these processes. As such, information in this chapter cannot be considered as being scientifically validated. Regardless of the subjective presentation, though, the reader should nonetheless be able to glean from the information a sufficiently clear picture of the Bahā'ī Community to form an impression as to whether or not the Covenant presents an adequate development plan and whether or not the plan is being followed.

4.2 Some Working Principles

Not to be confused with the principles presented in Chapter 3, the working principles of the Bahā'ī Faith apply more to the day-to-day living of individuals and communities than to long-term goals for mankind. The working principles describe and define how the development of the community is to be approached and what attitude members should have toward the community. Some of these principles have been alluded to in the previous chapters and will now be examined in detail.

4.21 The Transcendental Nature of Bahā'ī Administration

Bahā'ī Administration, because it is considered by Bahā'īs as coming directly from God through the Prophet, Bahā'u'llāh, assumes in the minds of the community members an entirely different character than the character ascribed to secular administration and bureaucracy, i.e., an impersonal, self-serving system that claims to provide for the needs of the majority, all the while ensuring that the needs of the system are met before those of the service population. As Shoghi Effendi (1955:156) so clearly states it:

> "Let no one, while this System is till in in its infancy, misconceive its character, belittle its significance or misrepresent its purpose. The bedrock on which this Administrative Order is founded is God's immutable Purpose for mankind in this day. The Source from which it derives its inspiration is no one less than Bahā'u'llāh Himself. Its shield and defender are the embattled hosts of the Abhā Kingdom.

The Administrative Order is not here to serve mankind's felt-needs but to serve "God's immutable Purpose for mankind". It is here to bring mankind to a level of functioning that God has determined that is needed and not to bring to mankind the services, wealth, power and glory that so many seem to be demanding from present-day secular administrations. In other words, the purpose of the Bahā'ī Administrative Order transcends temporal values and inculcates spiritual values.

When Bahā'īs involve themselves in the Administrative Order of Bahā'u'llāh, then, it is with a sense of awe before

its ultimate perfection, of humility before its power, of submission to its slightest command. The individual submerges himself completely in its structure, voraciously seeks to know its most intimate nuance, works diligently for the glorification of its smallest successes without any thought for personal gratification or aggrandisement and relies upon the Divine Assistance promised to the Administrative Order as his surest support. The more involved the Bahā'ī community member becomes, the more socialized by the system, the more committed and tireless are his efforts toward its stated goals. There is hardly a secular system that can claim this much self-sacrificing devotion from its adherents, for if such a secular system did exist, it would cease to be secular and would itself become religious or transcendent in nature.

Even the hierarchical system outlined in Figure 3 cannot hope to adequately describe how Bahā'īs about the system promulgated by their Covenant. Instead, the Order is the child of each community member who seeks to ensure that it will grow strong and flourish. It is, of course, also a child of God and revolves around His might and is assured of His blessings. A more adequate depiction of the Bahā'ī Administrative Order was provided by Shoghi Effendi* to some Bahā'īs visiting him in the Holy Land. That depiction, though difficult to fully expand on paper, is partially represented in Figure 4 on page 119.

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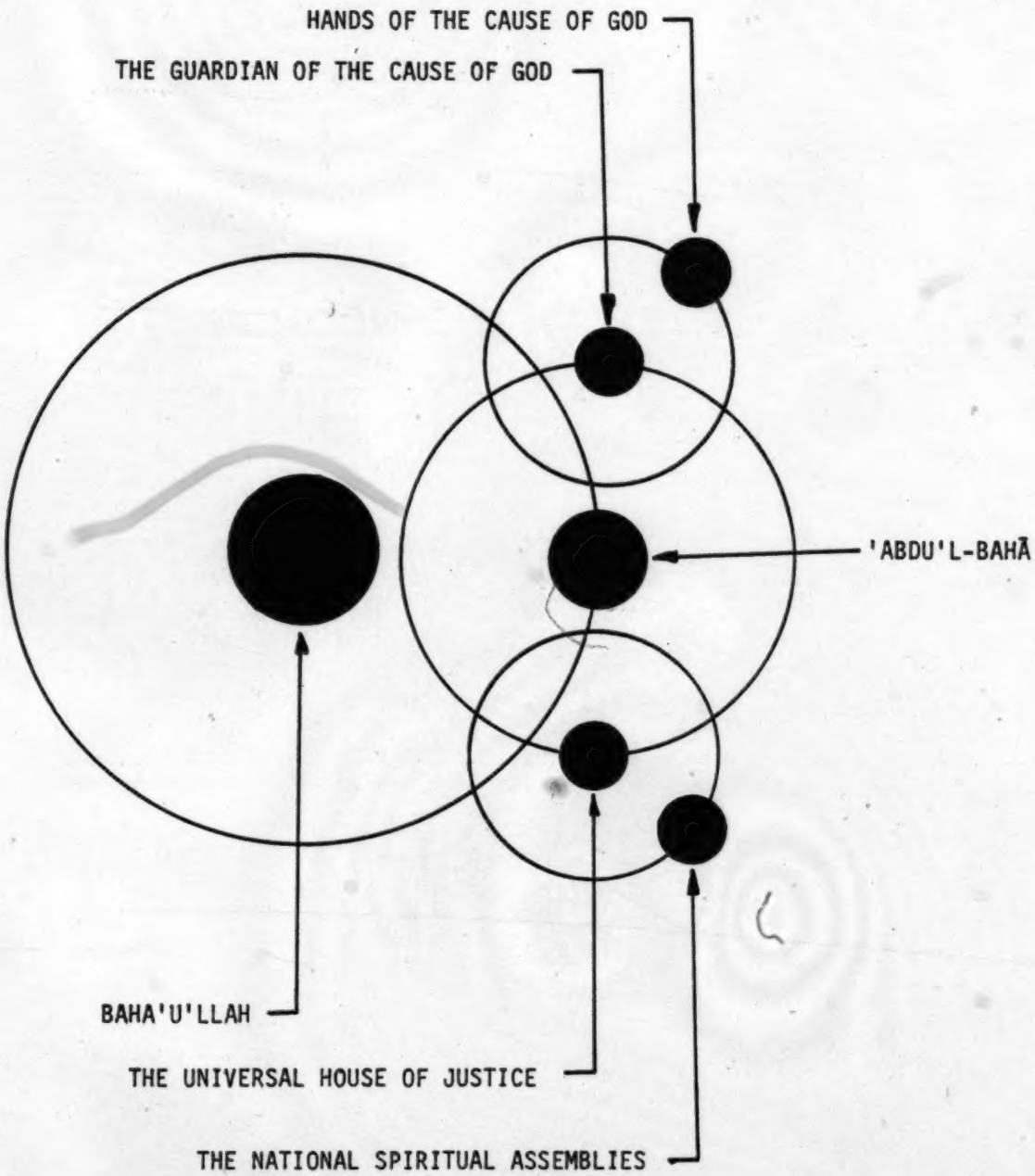
* I am indebted to Mr. Ted Anderson for this information from the Maxwell Pilgrim Notes.

FIGURE 4 - SPIRITUAL CONCEPT OF BAHĀ'Ī ADMINISTRATION


HANDS OF THE CAUSE OF GOD
THE GUARDIAN OF THE CAUSE OF GOD
'ABDU'L-BAHĀ
BAHA'U'LLAH
THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE
THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLIES

SOURCE: Maxwell Pilgrimage Notes

4.22 Consultation

In Bahā'ī parlance, consultation is not the activity whereby an individual asks an expert for advice or direction as the word is commonly used in government and agency circles, rather, it is a process by which the community members share ideas and perceptions to arrive at a consensus on the truth of the matter in question. This process has certain rules which must be strictly adhered to if the promised result is to be achieved. 'Abdu'l-Bahā, quoted by Shoghi Effendi (1968:21-22), sets out the rules as follows:

> "The prime requisite for them that take counsel together are purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold. Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahā shall be vouchsafed to them. In this day assemblies of consultation are of the greatest importance and a vital necessity. Obedience to them is essential and obligatory. The members thereof must take counsel together in such wise that no occasion for ill-feeling or discord may arise. This can be attained when every member expresseth with absolute freedom his own opinion and setteth forth his argument. Should any one oppose, he must on no account feel hurt for not until matters are fully discussed can the right way be revealed. The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions. If after discussion, a decision be carried unanimously well and good; but if, the Lord forbid, differences of opinion should arise, a majority of voices must prevail."

The process of consultation is used to arrive at every decision in the Bahā'ī Community, whether it be the smallest and most insignificant matter or one that is world-wide in its effect. This method of arriving at the truth is used in Bahā'ī family life between the two parties in a marriage and between parents and children; it is used amongst friends to help in solving the problems of one or the other, it is used in the community between the members and the Institutions and amongst the community members, themselves; it is used during all meetings of committees, Institutions and groups and it is used between Institutions. In each case, the rules are the same regardless of the level or authority of the parties to the consultation.

In practice, then, individuals consult together by first presenting the problem to the group. Once the problem has been presented, each member is given a chance to express his views as fully as possible without any interference from any other member of the group. Once a view has been presented, the individual renounces ownership of the opinion so that later he will not feel that he has to defend his views against the majority or that he has to hold to the initial view even after subsequent information proves his view to be incorrect. After all members of the group have had sufficient time to consult on the matter before them, the group tries to ascertain if a unanimous decision has been reached and, if not, a new round of discussions ensues until as close to an unanimous decision

as possible is reached.

Apart from the points of view of the members consulting together, the consultation process must always include prayer for divine guidance and examination of the Scriptures and other writings. Without these two factors, a consultation can never be said to have included all possible views and alternatives since divine inspiration and written guidance constitute the core of any search after the truth.

4.23 Equality

One of the principles outlined in Chapter 3 was 'equality between man and woman. The principle of equality, though, has a much greater application in the Bahā'ī Community. Not only are the sexes considered equal but all men are considered as equals before God regardless of their rank or station in life, regardless of their wealth or poverty, regardless of their capacity. Certain members of the community are given honor because of their achievements or because of their role in the community but when the affairs of the community, the division of labor in the community and the like are in question, all members have equal right to the benefits of the community.

As was intimated in the previous section, the principle of equality is especially apparent in the consultation process

where all are given the chance to participate equally. In describing that process, Shoghi Effendi (1968:63) says:

> "Let us also remember that at the very root of the Cause lies the principle of the undoubted right of the individual to self-expression, his freedom to declare his conscience and set forth his views..."

Similarly, in other spheres on operation, the Administrative Order allows no special privileges, applies the laws equally to all and steers away from any elitism. This has the effect of bringing people in the community together rather than setting them apart one from the other and, therefore, increases the solidarity of the community and its unity of purpose.

4.24 Unity through Obedience

Another factor which contributes to the unity of the community is the disallowance of minority positions within the operations of the community. As previously stated, the majority prevails in the Bahā'ī Faith, although consensus and unanimity is preferred. There will always be cases, though, where individuals will not be able, in conscience, to agree with the views of the majority. In this case, the dissenting individuals are encouraged to put forth their views on the matter until a decision is reached. Once a decision is reached, though, it is automatically considered unanimous and minority positions are deemed to be non-existant. Shoghi Effendi writes on this matter:

> "...once the opinion of the majority has been ascertained, all the members should automa-

> tically and unreservedly obey it, and faithfully carry it out."*

Individuals are certainly allowed to hold, in their own minds, an opinion different from the majority decision, but, since the Cause is more important than the individual and since only the majority decision is given the promise of divine assistance, these individuals willingly submit their will to that of the majority.

The minority opinion is still given the option of asking that the group reconsider its decision. Until the decision is reconsidered, though, the majority opinion is unquestioningly obeyed and wholeheartedly supported. If the reconsideration process shows that the decision was made in error or if new facts come to light then the decision is changed. If the decision remains the same, the majority continues to prevail. In the Administrative Order, decisions made by Institutions can be appealed in this way all the way to the Universal House of Justice where the decision becomes infallible and, therefore, unquestionable.

4.25 Group or Individual

It will be noticed from the structure and principles of the Bahā'ī Covenant that there is a strong preference in this

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* Universal House of Justice, comp., The Local Spiritual Assembly, Thornhill: The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, 1970, pp. 14-15.

system for group rather than individual decision-making and activity. The decision-making bodies of the Faith are all groups. Even the non-decision-making individuals of the community, e.g., the Hands of the Cause, the Counsellors, *et cetera*, are grouped into bodies of one type or another. The individual does have a role in that it is only through individual effort and initiative that the work will be completed. Nonetheless, even in the accomplishment of tasks, group work is preferred above individual work.

It should be apparent that the reason for this is that the Covenant focusses upon unity and upon the good of the whole. The individual is encouraged to develop his own capacities; however, as was previously stated, only if the whole community achieves its capacity through the efforts of the various individuals can the individual ever consider that he has succeeded in attaining for himself the goals of the Covenant. Another factor in the preference for group work is that the individual can never amass for himself personal glories which rightly belong to the community as a whole. The old adage that there is strength in numbers also applies to this preference for group work.

The result of this orientation in the community is, again, the fostering of unity and accord – the major goals of the Covenant. The individual usually finds that he can work in the Bahā'ī Community in security knowing that he does not have

total responsibility for the success of an effort, that his efforts will be multiplied by the addition of the efforts of others and that he will be protected in his doings by the group.

4.3 Institutions and Development Plans

The Covenant inherently contains all the past, present and future plans for the development of the community. The Institutions, as the temporal representations of the Covenant, are charged with finding ways to bring to fruition the goals and objectives of the Covenant. For individuals and for non-infallible Institutions, the Covenant represents a vision that cannot be completely grasped. For these, the Covenant, which has a time-span of one thousand years according to Bahā'u'-llāh, spans too many lifetimes to be comprehensible in human terms. Any research into the historical writings about the Faith would quickly show that, even in the immediate past, the community did not fully understand where the Covenant was leading it. In order for even small portions of the Covenant to be understood and acted upon by the community, it is necessary for the Institutions, beginning with those who have infallible guidance, to plan small steps that can easily be grasped by any individual in the community so that, one thousand years hence, the Covenant will have achieved the development of the community as promised. The Bahā'ī Community has participated in many such plans in its 139 years of existence

and will likely participate in many more in the centuries to come.

4.31 'Abdu'l-Bahā's Divine Plan

The first plan devised for the Bahā'ī Community for the development of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh, and the mother-plan of all subsequent plans, was 'Abdu'l-Bahā's Divine Plan developed by him in the years immediately following his travels to North America. In a series of letters or Tablets written to the North American Bahā'ī Community in 1916-1917, 'Abdu'l-Bahā outlined for the adherents what they must do to ensure that the community would grow and develop. The Writings of the Faith affirm that the Covenant, while revealed by Bahā'u'llāh in the East, will be diffused, not from the East but from the West (Shoghi Effendi, 1963). The Tablets of the Divine Plan, then, address themselves to the community members in the West giving them direction and encouragement so that they can meet the task that has been set before them.

In the fourteen Tablets addressed to them: four to the Bahā'īs of the United States and Canada, two each to the states in Northeastern, Southern, Central and Western United States and two to Canada, the believers were exhorted to spread the effects of the Covenant by sending teachers to all parts of their own countries and to all parts of the world.

They were also directed to translate, publish and circulate the Teachings, to be firm in the Covenant, to exhibit fellowship and love, to publish a magazine, and to ensure that no contention ever arise in their communities.

For Bahā'īs, the Tablets of the Divine Plan not only gave specific directions for activities and encouragement to all but also spiritually imbued this community with the power to meet its appointed task. Following the receipt of this plan, the North American Bahā'īs began travelling to all parts of South and Central America, to Africa, the Orient, the South Pacific and to Europe as well as to all parts of their own countries. Bahā'ī Communities were established in a number of places by these travellers and the process was underway.

4.32 Shoghi Effendi's First Seven Year Plan, 1937-1944

Sixteen years after his appointment by 'Abdu'l-Bahā as Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi presented the first step of his plan which was to lead to the establishment of a number of national communities and to culminate in the election of the Universal House of Justice. The First Seven Year Plan was addressed mainly to the Western Hemisphere and directed the small Bahā'ī Community to establish a community in every State and Province of North America and in every country in Central and South America. In addition to these growth goals, the Guardian directed that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in Chicago

be completed. This building had been commenced at 'Abdu'l-Bahā's direction and he had participated in the sod-turning ceremonies during his visits to North America. The foundations of the building has been built prior to the beginning of the Seven Year Plan and now the upper part of the building and the exterior ornamentation had to be completed.

By 1944, the Centenary of the Birth of the Faith, and the end of the first Seven Year Plan, each State and Province in the United States and Canada and each country in Central and South America had at least one Bahā'ī Community, some even had a functioning Local Spiritual Assembly. The Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in Chicago was completed with only the interior to finish. The goals of the plan had been met.

4.33 Shoghi Effendi's Second Seven Year Plan, 1946-1953

The second phase of Shoghi Effendi's plan was the Seven Year Plan which began in 1946 and ended in 1953. This plan addressed itself to the development of the Faith in Europe and to the consolidation of the communities created in the Americas during the last phase. This plan had four main objectives: the further development of the communities established during the last Seven Year Plan, the completion of the interior of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in Chicago, the formation of three National Spiritual Assemblies, one each in Canada, Central America and South America (the National Spiritual

Assembly of the United States had existed since the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahā), and the establishment of Bahā'ī Communities in ten European countries including: Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, Luxembourg and Switzerland. Bahā'ī Communities already existed in England, France, Germany, Yugoslavia, Czechoslavia, Germany and Bulgaria but these communities, following the Second World War, were in no shape to begin working on this scale. The North American Bahā'īs were therefore charged with this work. The National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles had continued to function throughout the war while that of Germany was dissolved by the Nazi Regime. This National Assembly had to be reconstituted during the Seven Year Plan as well.

The Second Seven Year Plan achieved all the goals set by the Guardian in addition to the formation of additional National Spiritual Assemblies in Switzerland and Italy. Added later in the Plan, Bahā'īs were also dispached from North America to Africa. The Guardian, for his part, created the International Bahā'ī Council, a forerunner to the Universal House of Justice and appointed his first contingent to the Institution of the Hands of the Cause as well as translating and publishing a number of books of Scripture. The Seven Year Plan culminated with the celebration of the 100th year since Bahā'u'llāh had received His Revelation and with the completion the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in Chicago – fully 41 years after the 1912 sod-turning ceremonies.

4.34 Shoghi Effendi's Ten Year Plan, 1953-1963

For the first time in Bahā'ī development plans, the Ten Year Plan incorporated a world-wide activity involving the National Assemblies of Persia; India, Pakistan and Burma; Iraq; Australia and New Zealand; the United States; Canada; Central America; South America; the British Isles; Italy and Switzerland; Egypt and Sudan and Germany and Austria as well as the World Centre. The goals of the Plan included: the spreading or consolidating of communities in 249 parts of the world, the creation of 48 new National Spiritual Assemblies, the translation and publication of Scriptures into the languages of the world, the building of three Mashriqu'l-Adhkārs – one each for Europe at Frankfurt, Germany; Africa at Kampala, Uganda and Australia at Sydney, the election of the Universal House of Justice, the building of three National Hazīratu'l-Quds, the building of the Shrine of the Bāb and the International Archives Building in Haifa and the beautification of the Shrine of Bahā'u'llāh in Bahjī, the appointment of more Hands of the Cause and the establishment of the Auxiliary Board and the creation of the Continental Fund.

With the death of Shoghi Effendi in 1957, the direction of the affairs of the Plan fell to the Hands of the Cause who were designated by the Guardian as the "Chief Stewards" of the Faith. Under their direction, the Ten Year Plan Goals were completed, including the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, the Centenary of the Declaration of the

Mission of Bahā'u'llāh.

4.35 The Nine Year Plan of the Universal House of Justice, 1964-1973

One year after its election, the Universal House of Justice presented its first plan. This Plan was also world-wide in scope but contained, in addition to the world-wide goals of the Plan, a plan assigned to each of the existing National Communities. The goals of the Nine Year Plan included:

a) the publication of a synopsis and codification of the Kitāb-i-Aqdas, Bahā'u'llāh's Book of Laws,

b) the formulation of a constitution for the Universal House of Justice,

c) the development of the Institution of the Hands of the Cause by the creation of the Continental Boards of Counsellors,

d) the continued classification and collation of the Bahā'ī Scriptures and writings,

e) the development of the Shrines at the World Centre,

f) the development of observer status with the United Nations,

g) the construction of Mashriqu'l-Adhkars in Panama for Central America and in Teheran for Persia (this latter House of Worship was not built because of difficulties with Bahā'ī persecutions in Irān),

h) the creation of 41 new National Spiritual Assemblies

to bring their number to 110,

i) the creation of 4 new Bahā'ī Publishing Trusts bringing their number to 12 and the translation of the works of the Faith into 97 more languages bringing their number to 497, and

j) the development of the spirit of Bahā'ī Community in all local communities through the principle of universal participation.

In addition, each National Community had assigned to it, a number of expansion and consolidation goals in its own country and abroad so that the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies and local Institutions would be increased and strengthened.

By 1972, the Universal House of Justice (1976) announced that the goals were almost all met and that there were now 56,645 Bahā'ī localities, 10,360 with Local Spiritual Assemblies in 317 countries and territories around the world. The number of National Spiritual Assemblies had increased to 114, six more than had been assigned in the Plan. With the exception of the building of the Persian House of Worship as previously explained, the goals of the Nine Year Plan were all met.

4.36 The Five Year Plan of the Universal House of Justice, 1974-1979

The second plan of the Universal House of Justice

was the third global plan and had a very ambitious program for each of the National Communities as well. The three objectives of the Plan were: to preserve and consolidate the achievements of past plans, to expand Bahā'ī Communities and to develop a distinctive character of Bahā'ī life. The goals of the plan now being placed before the community by the Universal House of Justice included:

a) the continued collation and classification of the Sacred Texts,

b) the translation and publication of three books of Scripture as yet unavailable,

c) the commencement of construction on the Seat of the Universal House of Justice at the World Centre,

d) further beautification of the Shrines at the World Centre,

e) the strengthening of the relationship with the United Nations,

f) the commencement of two Mashriqu'l-Adhkārs, one in Samoa for the Pacific and one in India,

g) the creation of 16 new National Spiritual Assemblies,

h) the creation of 6 new Bahā'ī Publishing Trusts,

i) 409 inter-Assembly assistance and development projects,

j) progress toward self-support for presently impoverished communities,

l) the expansion of the Bahā'ī Community to include every stratum of society and every minority,

m) the focus of Local Spiritual Assemblies on the dev-

elopment of Bahā'ī youth and their service to the community,

n) the development of Bahā'ī children's classes in every community,

o) the development of a distinctive character of Bahā'ī life, and

p) the strengthening of the Local Spiritual Assembly.

The assignments to the National Spiritual Assemblies, and each National Spiritual Assembly received a specific assignment, can best be exemplified by the assignment given to the Canadian National Assembly:

a) increase the number of localities where Bahā'īs reside to 1500,

b) increase the number of Local Spiritual Assemblies to 300, 150 of which must be incorporated,

c) increase the number of Bahā'īs,

d) expand the use of the media and develop personal skills in media use,

e) develop university courses on the Faith,

f) send 63 Bahā'īs to assist in other National Communities,

g) assist four National Communities in the development of their communities or in the acquisition of local and national Hazīratu'l-Quds or Temple sites,

h) assist in the development of the French language Publishing Trust, and

i) send Bahā'ī travel teachers to all parts of the globe.

When this type of national plan is multiplied by 115, the number of National Spiritual Assemblies that existed at the beginning of the plan, one can easily see that these plans are massive in scale.

At the end of the Five Year Plan, the Bahā'ī World Community had achieved the goals with 96,000 localities where Bahā'īs resided, 25,000 Local Spiritual Assemblies and 125 National Spiritual Assemblies. In addition to these goals, the Universal House of Justice had created the Institution of the International Teaching Centre, which would develop future plans for the World Community, and had expanded the Institution of the Auxiliary Board Members by creating the Assistants to Auxiliary Board Members.

4.37 The Seven Year Plan of the Universal House of Justice, 1979-1986

The third plan of the Universal House of Justice, the fourth global plan and the sixth plan under the aegis of the Divine Plan of 'Abdu'l-Bahā is the Seven Year Plan, underway at the time of this writing. This Plan has been divided, by the Universal House of Justice, into three phases of 2 years, 3 years and 2 years respectively. Apart from its world-wide goals, this Plan, also, has individual national goals assigned by the World Centre. The world-wide plans include, in the first phase:

a) the completion of the Seat of the Universal House

of Justice,

b) the expansion of the role of the International Teaching Centre,

c) the opening of a new Shrine at the World Centre,

d) the preparation and publication of a series of compilations on various aspects of the Bahā'ī Administrative Order and on Bahā'ī life,

e) the strengthening of connections with the United Nations,

f) 19 new National Spiritual Assemblies,

g) the completion of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in Samoa and the continuation of work on this Institution in India,

h) the expansion of the community, and

i) the consolidation, strengthening and development of financial independence in Local Communities focussing on family life, children, youth and the role of women.

In the second phase, continuing up to March 1984, the goals are:

a) the creation of 2 National Spiritual Assemblies,

b) the publication of a book on the history of one member of Bahā'u'llāh's family,

c) the occupation of the Seat of the Universal House of Justice,

d) the expansion of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār in Europe by the building of the first of its dependencies, a home for the aged,

e) the creation of 2 new Publishing Trusts,

f) the development of three radio stations in South America, and

g) work on the quantitative and qualitative goals set in the first phase.

As yet, the tallies are not in on this Plan but if past successes are any indication, this Plan is likely to succeed bringing the Bahā'ī Community to yet another stage of development.

This exposition of the various development plans of the Bahā'ī Community has been undertaken to show that the goals given the Community by the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh are being effected in gradual stages and that the internal and external development of the Community in the sole goal of each of the various plans. Since all these plans are but extensions of the Covenant, it can be said that the Covenant, itself, is providing the impetus for the development of the Community and is therefore a development plan. In order to extend the understanding of the Bahā'ī development process even further, the next two sections will examine the role of the individual in community development and the process of developing a working Bahā'ī Community.

4.4 Knowledge, Volition and Action – The Role of the Individual in Development

The Bahā'ī Writings are very specific on the role of the

individual in the development of the community – the individual, alone or in groups, who has the power to make the Covenant a reality. The Universal House of Justice (1981:37) says on this point:

> "Authority and direction flow from the Assemblies, whereas the power to accomplish the tasks resides primarily in the entire body of the believers. It is the task of the Auxiliary Boards to assist in arousing and releasing this power."

'Abdu'l-Bahā (1909-1916:265) speaks of the "power latent in human endeavor" while Bahā'u'llāh (Shoghi Effendi, 1963:19) says that the believers are "the lump that must leaven the peoples of the world." In order to be effective in his task, though, the individual must first develop a profound knowledge of the Teachings and Institutions of his Faith. Armed with that knowledge, the Bahā'ī Scriptures assert, the individual will, through the power of this knowledge and the assistance of the Spiritual Kingdom, be motivated to great things in the name of the Covenant and will actually achieve what he sets out to do for the community. 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1945:101) states this point even clearer when he says:

> "The attainment of any object is conditioned upon knowledge, volition and action. Unless these three conditions are forthcoming there is no execution or accomplishment."

Bahā'u'llāh (1952:149) adds to this formula the inherent capacity given to each individual by God:

> "Unto each one hath been prescribed a preordained measure, as decreed in God's mighty and guarded Tablets. All that ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own vol-

> ition. Your own acts testify to this truth."

Because of the power of group action, when the individual's efforts are joined with those of many others in the pursuit of a Plan to bring about the reality of the Covenant, the results, perforce, are great. Only the individual, though, can make the initial step to acquire knowledge and act upon it.

4.5 The Process of Developing a Community

As was pointed out in the material of the preceeding Chapters, the Bahā'ī Community operates on three levels, namely, the local level, the national level and the international level. The development of each of these levels takes place in a different way because of the different processes involved at each level. Each of these levels will be examined separately in the development process but as a unit in the operational process since the entire is considered as a unit.

4.51 The Birth of a Local Community

A Bahā'ī community is brought into being in two ways. The most common way is for someone living in an area where there are no Bahā'īs to become aware of the Teachings of the Faith and to become an adherent. At this stage the community is called a "locality". A locality can be created with only one Bahā'ī resident. The new believer, once he has been formally admitted into the Community by either the National Spir-

itual Assembly or a near-by Local Spiritual Assembly acting on the National Assembly's behalf, is provided with various materials on the Faith and is invited to participate in various community activities so that his knowledge of the Faith deepens. The study of the Teachings of the Faith will indicate to the individual what he must do to become a fully-functioning member of that community. One of the things that the individual will learn about the Faith is that he has a duty to apprise others of the Teachings of the Faith – in essence, to teach other non-Bahā'īs about the aims and goals of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh. Through teaching efforts the individual will likely increase the membership in his particular community as has been shown by the results of the Plans outlined in this chapter.

A second way for the formation of a community to take place is by having a Bahā'ī move to a locality where no Bahā'ī presently exists. This process is called "pioneering" in that new ground is being opened for the Faith. Pioneering can take place at the direction of one of the Administrative Bodies of the Faith, through the goals of a Plan or on the individual's own volition. Regardless of the motivating force behind the move, the individual, once in this new locality, continues to have a duty to teach others about the Faith and, thereby, to increase the number of other Bahā'īs in the community. Being alone in a locality presents certain problems for a Bahā'ī. He is cut off from participation in the

activities of community-life and has to rely on his own strengths to maintain a commitment to the Teachings of the Faith. Because of the strong group orientation of the Faith, Bahā'īs finding themselves in such an isolated situation usually work very hard to gather other Bahā'īs around them.

Once there are two or more Bahā'īs in a locality but less than nine, the locality becomes known as a "group". The group begins to function more like a community in that it elects officers, holds meetings, celebrates Holy Days, establishes classes for children and adults for the study of the Teachings and develops an operating budget. The group's main goal is to continue the teaching work and to encourage pioneers to relocate to their community so that a Local Spiritual Assembly can be formed. Both groups and localities fall under the direction of a committee of the National Spiritual Assembly and receive encouragement, plans and support from this committee.

A Bahā'ī Local Spiritual Assembly is formed whenever there are nine or more Bahā'īs residing in a locality. The number nine is the number defined in Bahā'ī Scripture as being the number needed for such an Institution. The Local Spiritual Assembly is formed either by acclamation, if there are just nine believers, or by election, if there are more than nine. Once the Local Assembly is formed, the direction of the affairs of the community comes under its jurisdiction

and it immediately sets up a number of subsidiary Institutions to meet the needs of the local community. These local Institutions are: the Fund which will receive the voluntary donations of the community members and which will support the activities of the local community and of all the other Funds in the Administrative Order; the Nineteen-Day Feast which will permit a dialogue between the community members and the Local Spiritual Assembly every Bahā'ī month and will provide an avenue for the deepening of the community members knowledge of the Faith and of each other; and classes for children (if there are any) and for the adult members of the community so that there can be an on-going educational and deepening program carried out in the community.

The Local Assembly is an independent organ in the Bahā'ī Faith and therefore is autonomous within its own sphere subject only to the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly. The members of the community turn to this Institution for direction in all things as one would turn to a parent and supports whatever plan the Assembly presents for the continued growth of the community. As a firmly founded community, the 'Assembly' community has more of a responsibility in the national and international community than did groups or localities. It must now make a commitment to send teachers and pioneers to other localities, to provide financial support for the activities of the National, Continental and International Funds and to begin thinking about the establishment of the Institutions of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār and its depend-

encies, the Local Hazīratu'l-Quds, and various committees as well as continuing with the consolidation of its own community. To assist each Assembly in gaining the commitment of local believers to their works, the Auxiliary Board provides the assistance of an Auxiliary Board Member and his Assistants. The Auxiliary Board Member may be assigned a number of Local Assemblies to work with by the Continental Board, and therefore assigns an Assistant to work directly with the Local Assembly. The Assistant assists the Local Assembly by encouraging activity amongst the community members, by helping the Local Assembly develop its resources, by acting as a role-model for the community and by training local community members to better meet their tasks.

The Local Spiritual Assembly is elected yearly at which time the out-going Assembly reports its activities to the community members and consults with it on the development of the community. The Annual Meeting provides the community another chance to provide input into the direction of the community both through consultation and through the election process. Once elected, the new Local Assembly will elect its officers and continue the direction of the affairs of the community.

4.52 The Creation of a National Community

A National Spiritual Assembly depends upon having as its

base strong and fully-functioning Local Spiritual Assemblies. When the Universal House of Justice determines that a sufficient number of Local Assemblies have been formed and that these are of sufficient strength to support the activities of the National Spiritual Assembly, it calls for the election of the delegates who will elect this Institution. In each region of the country or territory, a certain number of delegates are elected so that the total number is a multiple of 19. These delegates consult on the affairs of the Faith in each region with the believers at the Regional Conventions and then proceed to the National Convention where they first elect the National Spiritual Assembly and then consult with the newly elected Institution on the affairs of the Faith in the country or territory. In subsequent years, the out-going National Assembly will report on the activities of the National Community to the delegates prior to the election of the new National Assembly.

Once elected, the National Spiritual Assembly is charged with the affairs of all the localities, groups and Local Spiritual Assemblies in their country or territory. It must immediately provide for the development of the Institutions of the National Fund, the Mashriqu'l-Adhkār and its dependencies, the National Hazīratu'l-Quds and Schools and must develop its administrative committees which will assist in the development of the National Community. For the assistance of the National Assembly, the Universal House of Justice assigns a

Continental Counsellor to work with the Assembly in a manner similar to the operation of the Auxiliary Board Member and his Assistants with the Local Spiritual Assembly.

In addition to the administration of the National Community, the National Assembly also collaborates with other National Assemblies providing financial assistance to various projects, providing pioneers and teachers for the development of the community, and providing information resources in the form of books published in the national language of the receiving community. The National Assembly also collaborates with the Universal House of Justice providing financial assistance and carrying out the Plans instituted by this Body. The National Spiritual Assembly also develops its own plans for the development of the National Community or is assigned a plan by the Universal House of Justice.

The National Spiritual Assembly, in every fifth year, is the electoral body which elects the Universal House of Justice at the International Convention. All National Assemblies gather in Haifa, Israel to elect the members of the Supreme Body of the Bahā'ī Community and to become apprised of the affairs of the International Community as previously described in Chapter 3.

4.53 The Role of the Individual in the Bahā'ī World Faith

As has already been outlined, the individual is the bas-

is for all the activities of the community. He teaches, pioneers, deepens himself in his knowledge of the Faith and its Teachings, participates in the establishment of new communities, participates in the election of and consultation with the Institutions of the community and, if elected or appointed, serves on and participates in the consultation of the Local Spiritual Assembly, the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Convention, the Universal House of Justice, the Continental Boards of Counsellors, the Auxiliary Boards and the Assistants to the Auxiliary Boards. The individual is intimately involved with every aspect of the Bahā'ī Community, whether it be local, national or international, and is a valued resource to the development of that community. At every stage, the individual, as part of the community, is consulted on matters pertaining to the growth and development of the community and, according to the rules of the process of consultation, his views are accepted as an important part of the process of arriving at the truth.

Further to this intimate connection to the affairs of the Faith, the individual is also connected, as an individual, to each of the Institutions of the community. The believer is encouraged to communicate his views and questions to any of the Institutions, including the Universal House of Justice, at any time. Should he disagree with a decision at a lower level in the Administrative Order, he is permitted to appeal that decision the the next higher Institution if he wishes.

The individual Bahā'ī, then, because of this close connection with every aspect of the Bahā'ī Faith, has a sense of ownership and dedication to his community that is difficult to match. He knows that his successes, whether spiritual or temporal, are the successes of the entire community and that his failures likewise affect the entire community. He has, on the one hand, a sense of being in control of his destiny and that of his community and, on the other hand, of being in a system that operates in a clear, orderly and divinely guided way. In other words, he is ultimately secure.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the various processes which figure in the operation of the Bahā'ī World Community. The governing processes examined showed that the community, true to its Covenant, is operating in such a way as to maximize the benefits of community life through respect, acceptance, and encouragement of individual action and group successes. The various global, national and local plans provide for the orderly development of the community in keeping with the provisions of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh and have, up to this point, provided proof that the development plans are capable of attracting the adherence of the individuals of the community and that they are capable of achieving success. The role of the individual, such an integral part in the development of any community, has been clearly defined and provides for each person in the community a route by which he can be of optimal

service to himself and to the community. And, finally, the process of developing the community from the local to the national and international level was described showing that, in every phase and in every Institution, the individual was able to find some niche wherein he could feel that he was important to the community and that he was participating in both the growth of the community and in the betterment of his own life.

The system developed by Bahā'u'llāh as a result of the Covenant He brought from God seems to be ideally suited to the development of a community. Its direction is so clear and its every development provided for that it would make it difficult for any confusion to arise regarding the operation of the plan or its ultimate goals. The Writings provide clear checks at every juncture and, where no direction is given in the Writings, the Covenant provides for infallible guidance from the Universal House of Justice and the Guardianship, giving the community assurance that it is travelling along the right path. This type of assurance is difficult in any community development project because the rules are never clear and because, especially in secular projects, the nature of a religious development plan transcends and temporal aspirations that participants may have. That, is, if the believers in religion commit themselves to a particular religious system, they are likely to behave in a very different manner than one would expect in the development of a community where a number

diverging viewpoints and desires have to be taken into consideration when the development plan is proposed. In a religious community, the viewpoints and desires are homogenious. In the final chapter, we will be looking at the comparison between religious and secular community development to show how they are similar and how they differ.

CHAPTER 5

THE COVENANT – A DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVE

> "...most ventures are fairly explicit about the dual goals of the accomplishment of specific tasks [and] the social process of enhancing community decision-making capacity. But when the chips are down, it is the task goals that hold sway."
> (Warren, 1971:286)

5.1 Review of Objectives

It will be recalled that the hypothesis in Chapter 1 was that both secular and religious community development are undertaken on the basis of a common understanding or covenant and that such a covenant describes the necessary and sufficient conditions for development and is, therefore, likely to enhance the development process if it is present. It was also hypothesized that the religious covenant is more explicit and authoritative than the secular covenant because it is said to come from the Godhead and, therefore, carries more weight than a secular covenant for those who adhere to its principles and teachings. If the strength of the covenant has anything to do with success in development, it was postulated, then religious covenants should be more successful in developing a community than should secular covenants. The question, though, was whether or not the religious covenant was, in actuality, a community develop-

ment plan. In order to ascertain this, academic community development literature was reviewed to arrive at a definition of community development.

A review of the community development literature resulted in the following definition of community development:

> A sustained process which seeks to induce change in the community toward greater local participation, greater levels of self-help and individual initiative, greater local autonomy, and improvements in the economic, social and educational condition of the participants, and which follows a pre-determined plan which may have originated either at the local level ot ar a higher level but in which responsibility for achieving the goals and the direction of the activity are undertaken at the local level and addresses local 'felt-needs', and which relies on the initiative of local people but may also use the resources of a change agent, preferably a member of the community, to stimulate, inform, educate and encourage local participation, and in which movement is made toward strengthening the horizontal pattern of the community rather than the vertical pattern, i.e., strengthening connection and co-operation amongst the local subsystems and reinforcing local authority, goal-setting and decision-making.

This definition was proposed as a bench-mark for the comparison of secular and religious community development plans and methods since comparison of the successes of religious over secular development would be a moot point, at best.

The various definitions of the covenant which were reviewed, showed the covenant to be an agreement between two or more parties which prescribes certain behaviors or acts and which is somehow enforceable. In the helping professions, the covenant was elaborated to include a description of the target problems, strategies for overcoming these problems

and the roles and expectations of the parties to the agreement. In religion, though, the covenant was found to have a much more detailed protocol. Because religious covenants are agreements between man and his God, the impact of these instruments was expected to be greater and to cover a long period in man's history. The schema for religious covenants was found to contain the following: direction concerning future changes to the covenant, teachings to create a new awareness in the community, a line of succession to the original law-giver, the definition of community membership, provision of laws relating to the law-giver, provision of laws relating to the community, the creation of institutions, provision of laws relating to institutions and provisions for dealing with those who break the laws and teachings of the covenant. It was pointed out that if a religious covenant met all these conditions, it would most assuredly present a strong development plan for a community. Any covenant, it was felt, has certain benefits, especially if it was clearly enunciated, in that it would give the community a clear understanding of the responsibilities of the parties; it would provide a clear plan for development and it would provide an evaluation tool with which to judge success or failure.

Using the original hypothesis, the community development definition and the definition of a covenant, most particularly, a religious covenant, it is now necessary to measure the Bahā'ī Covenant against these standards and to explain the discrepancies that may occur. It is also necessary to review

covenants in general to see if they meet the criteria of being community development plans.

5.2 The Bahā'ī Covenant in Review

Bahā'īs see their Covenant and its provisions as being a community development plan so complete that no outside support systems and no additional information will be needed to make it work effectively in this role, save only the future adjustments that will be made internally to respond to the changing situation in the world community. The reasons for this confidence in the Covenant, as was previously outlined, are twofold: first, that the term of the Covenant as defined by the Prophet extends for a certainty over the next millenium and second, that the Prophet asserted that the Covenant was able to meet all future challenges as long as it was whole-heartedly supported by its adherents. The Covenant, then, is seen as an instrument that will weather the community through any storm, whether internal or external, and that will provide for the community what it needs, when it needs it during the term of its ascendancy. Apart from the religious confidence that Bahā'īs have in their Covenant, it remains to be seen if the Covenant meets the requirements put forth in this study for a community development plan.

5.21 The Bahā'ī Covenant and the Hypothesis

When compared to the hypothesis presented at the begin-

ning of this thesis, it can be seen that the Covenant of Bahā-'u'llāh is, at least for the adherents of the Covenant, a common understanding that describes the necessary and sufficient conditions for development. It has also, in the same light, enhanced the development process in the Bahā'ī Community in that it has attracted the unquestioned loyalty of the members who have carried out its provisions without interfering in the plan. The Bahā'ī Community, then, has developed just as the Covenant prescribes and, as far as development according to the plan goes, the development process has thus been enhanced. It can be said, then, that the Bahā'ī Covenant meets the first requirement of the hypothesis which is that development be undertaken on the basis of a common understanding which describes the necessary and sufficient conditions for development and is, therefore, likely to enhance the development of the community.

The second part of the hypothesis postulated that the religious covenant was more authoritive and explicit than was a secular covenant and that it would carry more weight with the adherents than would a secular development plan. While this thesis has not examined the adherence of the secular community to its development plans, *per se*, it has been pointed out that secular development plans are often scuttled before they get a chance to prove whether or not they would have succeeded if left alone (Glick:1978, Freire:1970, *et cetera*). In the case of the religious covenant, this situation

could never exist since the Covenant of God is considered to continue its progress despite the efforts of certain powers and individuals to impede its progress. The covenant may be modified, as can be seen in some historical cases, to get around these impediments, but the covenant nevertheless goes on with its development plans. The adherents may go underground for a time, as in the case of early Christians, or they may relocate to avoid persecution, as in the case of the English Puritans, or they may become militant, as in the case of Islām, but sooner or later, the plans of the covenant resurface and begin anew their work. Planned secular community development, with its reliance upon the acceptance of political sources of power for continued existence, is less likely to survive a concerted attempt to eradicate its activities, and even if it goes underground, as in the case of revolutions, it is more likely to change its course than would a religious covenant.

As was shown in the description of the religious covenant on pages 28 et seqq. and in the description of the Bahā'ī Covenant in Chapter 3, the religious covenant is very explicit in its provisions covering the development and operation of the community from the level of the individual member up to the level of the institutions which guide the community's activity and development. As was pointed out in Chapter 2, the religious covenants of other religions have not always contained provisions for succession and for institutional

development at their inception; however, these elements have been deemed important by the community and have therefore been included at a later date and justified with the existing provisions of the covenant. The hallmark of the Bahā'ī Faith is that both succession and institutional development have been included by the Prophet, Himself, in the original covenant thereby ensuring that all the needs of the community were met and also ensuring that there would be nothing added to the covenant at a later date that would cause the disunity of the community, since, as Bahā'u'llāh points out, religion should be the cause of unity and not of disunity. The religious covenant in general and the Bahā'ī Covenant in particular, then, can be seen to meet the requirements of the second hypothesis in that they are, indeed, explicit and authoritive, especially for those who adhere to the provisions of these religious plans.

While this thesis has not examined secular community development projects and compared these to religious community development projects to ascertain the success-rate of one over the other, this omission has not been through oversight but through intention. The comparison of these two types of projects and their success-rates is a moot point and one that would surely lead to endless debate. There are many similarities between religious and secular development plans but the main and most significant difference, namely, the transcendental nature of religion, precludes a comparison between

successes and failures. The only way this hypothesis can be examined, then, is to present the successes and failures of religious community development and to let these stand as their own argument as to the strengths of this type of development.

The world's major religions hold sway amongst them over a large majority of the world population. Each of these religions has a viable and visible community which has weathered since the birth of the community a great many advances and set-backs and yet each of them has continued to exist and develop. Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islām, even though they may be subject to sectarianism, must still be viewed as successful communities. The Bahā'ī Faith has thus far managed to avoid any schisms in its community and, according to the provisions of its Covenant, will continue to do so. As was shown in the section on development plans (pp. 127 et seqq.) and in Appendix I, the community has grown from a mere handful at the time of the Bāb to over 25,000 Local Spiritual Assemblies in 340 countries in 1982. The structure of the community has also followed a similar growth-path starting from a loosely knit group of believers in the time of the Bāb to a stable pattern of institutions and procedures. As examples of success, religious communities should certainly be accepted, on the above-listed facts alone, as successful.

Whether or not this success can be attributed to the Cov-

enant as the development plan for these communities can only be examined, in light of the material presented in this thesis, in terms of the Bahā'ī Faith. There is no question in the minds of the Bahā'ī Community that its development is closely tied to the Covenant. An external examination of the Bahā'ī Community should, if the provisions of the Covenant are compared to the actual structure of the community, yield the same conclusion. As outlined in Chapter 3, the elements of the Bahā'ī Covenant are visible in the present Community all the way from how community members relate to each other and to their Institutions to how the Institutions operate. If this were not the case, sects rebelling against non-adherence to certain provisions of the Covenant would have arisen and would have continued to thrive by now. In the development of Christianity and Islām, disagreements over points of their covenants had arisen within the first few years, or even hours, following the death of the Prophet. The continued existence of the Copts and Nestorians in Christianity and the Sunni and Shi'āh sects in Islām attest to these early divisions. The Bahā'ī Faith has not, to this point, developed any of these sectarian divisions. The Bahā'ī Covenant, then, can be seen to have met the conditions of the hypothesis that the covenant acts as a development plan for the community.

In reviewing the Bahā'ī Covenant against the hypotheses proposed in Chapter 1, it has been shown that the Covenant

provides the necessary and sufficient conditions for development and that it has enhanced the development of the Bahā'ī Community. It has also been shown that this Covenant is explicit and authoritative and therefore carries more weight in the community than a secular plan. Further, it has been shown that the Covenant does, indeed, constitute a community development plan. Based upon the material presented in this thesis, it has been impossible to prove that religious communities are more successful at development than are secular communities although it has been established that religious communities are definitely successful in their development processes. Having met the conditions of the hypotheses, the examination of the Bahā'ī Covenant now turns to a comparison between the definition of community development proposed in Chapter 1 and the processes and structure of the Bahā'ī Community.

5.22 The Bahā'ī Covenant and Community Development

The definition of community development presented in Chapter 1 identifies nine key issues which permit a certain process to be called community development. These issues are: that it be a sustained process; that change occur through the process; that the process increase local participation, self-help and individual initiative; that there be an improvement in the economic, social or educational conditions of the participants; that the process be planned; that there be lo-

cal responsibility for the process; that the process address local 'felt-needs'; that the process use change agents, if necessary and that the process increase the horizontal rather than the vertical integration of the community. To ascertain whether or not the Bahā'ī Covenant and its activities constitute community development, each of these issues will be examined against what has been proposed about the Bahā'ī Covenant.

5.221 Sustained Process: As was pointed out in section 3.31 of Chapter 3, the Bahā'ī Covenant is given a term of at least one thousand years. During this time, the process of developing the community is expected to continue unabated until not only the structures proposed by the Covenant are in place but also until the laws and teachings become ingrained into the fabric of the society that the Covenant will create. The process, therefore, can be said to be a sustained one; one that will certainly sustain itself for at least the next millenium.

5.222 Change: In section 3.32 of Chapter 3, teachings are proposed for an "ever-advancing civilization". Any advance in a civilization quite likely means change of one sort or another and, quite likely, a very profound change. The Bahā'ī notion that religious covenants and civilization are progressive and ever-changing should confirm that the process it enshrines in its Covenant will also enshrine change. The

outlined in the above-named section will require that present-day standards change a great deal before the set-standard is met.

5.223 Local Participation, Self-Help and Initiative: As it was pointed out in Chapters 3 and 4, and especially in Chapter 4, page 139, the individual and his power to bring into being the provisions of the Covenant is paramount in the Bahā'ī Faith. The individual, as it was mentioned, is responsible to see that not only is his personal spiritual development and temporal development achieved to capacity but that the goals of the Covenant are also achieved, at the same time, in the development of the community. Individual self-help and initiative are therefore highly praised and encouraged in the Faith. The individual is encouraged to teach, to pioneer, to give to the Fund, to attend and participate in the affairs of the community and of the Institutions on the one hand while praying, studying the Scriptures, learning a trade and doing good works on the other hand.

Not only is the individual given paramouncy in the Bahā'ī Community, the Local Spiritual Assembly and the National Spiritual Assembly are also given the all-important task of developing, in conjunction with the global plans, plans that will meet the needs of the local community as well as those of the global community as expressed in the global plans. The formulation of the global plans does not take place in a vacuum. Rather the Universal House of Justice

and the International Teaching Centre, through a long process of consultation with National Spiritual Assemblies and with the Continental Boards of Counsellors and, through these Institutions, the Local Spiritual Assemblies, Auxiliary Board Members and their Assistants and the general body of the community, arrive at a global plan that takes into consideration the present state of the community, the present resources of the community (both temporal and spiritual) and the future needs of the community. Further, the individual, it will be recalled, as well as any local administrative body, can, at any time, present plans, information or ideas to any of the Institutions at a higher level. Local initiative, self-help and participation, then are quite adequately covered in the provisions of the Covenant. It will be noted that this process also means that the community development definition's issue of local responsibility and addressing local felt-needs is also met.

5.224 Improvement in Economic, Social and Educational Conditions of the Participants: The Baha'i Covenant clearly provides for the social and educational improvement of the condition of its community members through both its Teachings and its Institutions. Teachings regarding self-improvement in the arts and sciences and the learning of a trade or profession denote that some kind of improvement in the quality of life is desired in the Covenant. The Institutions of the Nineteen-Day Feast, Schools and the like provide for the social as well as educational development

of the community members. While the Faith is not considered an economic system, there are, nonetheless, teachings in the Scriptures pertaining to the economic development of the community and of the world ('Abdu'l-Bahā, 1971:151-154). The Covenant does, then, address all the issues put forth by this part of the definition of community development.

5.225 Planned: There can be no question from the plans outlined in Chapter 4 that the Bahā'ī Community and its development are planned and that the plan is an integral part of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh. As was previously mentioned, the development of the community is planned, not only from a global perspective but also from a national and local perspective. Planning forms an important part of the activities of all the Bahā'ī Administrative Institutions, and, as was pointed out in section 5.221 of this chapter, this planning is likely to continue for at least a millenium.

5.226 Use of Change Agents: The description of the Institutions of the Learned (pp. 81-91) and of their role in the development of the community in Chapter 4 clearly shows that these Institutions have, as main responsibility, the encouragement, stimulation and education of the community. They also inform the community and encourage local participation. The grass-roots representative of this work is the Assistant to the Auxiliary Board Member who is responsible for this work at the local community level. All the members of this Institution have been known and are usually assigned to be

the motivators behind the plans of the Institutions of the Rulers. Their role, as seen in the quotation on page 139, is to release the power of the community toward the meeting of the goals of the plans. Assemblies are also, in their own right, change agents in the community as are also the Institution of the Schools. Through their administrative and educational functions, these latter Institutions bring about a change in the community through information and encouragement rather than by grass-roots activity, however, their role is just as important in the community as that of the grass-roots change agents, i.e., the Assistants and Auxiliary Board Members. At the national level, the Continental Boards of Counsellors are the change agents, although their role is much more formalized than that of the local change agent. The Covenant, through its Institutions, then, provides the community with change agents to assist in development planning and activity.

5.227 Strengthen Horizontal Rather Than Vertical: Applied to the Bahā'ī Administrative Order, Warren's (1963:161-162) definition of vertical would refer to the connection between the various Institutions according to their heirarchical placement as shown in Figure 3, p. 108. The horizontal connection would refer to the communications between the Local Spiritual Assembly, the Assistants to the Auxiliary Board, the various committees of the National Spiritual Assembly who operate on the local level and the general body of believers. Even this description, though, would not adequately

describe the vertical-horizontal set-up of the Bahā'ī Community since, as was previously mentioned, the individual can, according to Bahā'ī principle, transcend any vertical structure in the community simply by communicating directly with Institutions at ever higher levels. Given this freedom, the individual need hardly concern himself with alienation and anomie in an hierarchical system – as far as the individual is concerned, the whole of Bahā'ī administration is horizontal. On a true-horizontal level, though, the strongly encouraged communication between those administrative structures and the community and amongst the local structures as witnessed by the principle of consultation (p. 120 et seqq.) clearly points to the strong horizontal tendency of Bahā'ī development plans.

The various issues of the definition of community development, when examined in relation to the Bahā'ī Faith and its Covenant, seem to indicate that the Covenant does fit the definition of community development and can therefore be considered as a development plan. Having now met both the propositions of the hypothesis and of the community development definition, all that remains is the review of the Covenant of Bahā'u'llāh in relation to the legal, clinical and religious definition of covenants.

5.23 The Bahā'ī Covenant and Other Covenants

Chapter 2 was devoted entirely to the examination of

the various aspects of covenants presently in use in the legal, helping professional and religious fields. From this examination, it was found that religious covenants in general met the standard definition of a covenant as used by both the legal profession and the helping professions. The religious covenant was found to have certain elements as outlined on pages 28-38 and page 153. The description of the Bahā'ī Covenant, as provided in Chapter 3, was able to follow this outline of a religious covenant without any deviation. In fact, the Bahā'ī Covenant was able to claim, as part of its Scriptures, provisions not included in other religious covenants at their inception, namely, provision for an authorized interpreter to succeed the Prophet (pp 76-80) and for authorized Institutions defined by the Prophet (pp 74-109). The other elements of the religious covenant have all been met including: the provision of direction on future Prophets; the provision of teachings to advance the community; the provision of laws relating to God, the Prophets, the Institutions and to the community; the provision of a definition of community membership and the provision of means to protect the community and its Covenant. From this it becomes apparent that the Bahā'ī Covenant meets all the criteria of covenants and, from the definition of covenants, also meets the criteria of being considered as a development plan.

In the preceeding pages, it has been shown that the Bahā'ī Covenant is a development plan that succeeds in providing both a community development blueprint for its com-

munity and a spiritual blueprint for its community members. It also meets the requisites of being a covenant, that is, an agreement between two or more parties and a religious covenant, that is, an agreement between God and man. Because of this fact, the Bahā'ī Covenant is able to command, both amongst its members and between its members and God, a special status in development plans – an infallible tool that is faithfully followed by the community and that is a cause of unity and strength. The examination of the original hypotheses of this thesis showed that the Bahā'ī Covenant was also able to demonstrate that it is able to develop a strong and integrated community because of its dual role as a development plan and religious covenant and because its provisions are so explicit in nature. As a development plan and as a religious covenant, one would be hard-pressed to find one equal to the strength that the Bahā'ī Covenant presents.

5.3 Similarities – Religious and Secular

Religious and secular development show similarities in two main area, namely, in their goals for the community and in their plans. In the first case, the goals of local process, self-help, improvement in the human condition and community stability over a long period are common to both religious and secular development. The review of the literature in Chapter 1 shows how these goals are generally accepted as being commonly-held goals of secular community development. Even with the many disagreements that exist in sec-

ular development literature, it seems, from the literature reviewed, that at least the above-listed goals could pass as being acceptable to all. In the area of religious development, the goals have always been with improving the condition of man, especially in relation to man's connection with God. These goals are effected mainly at a local level where they can be better understood through real-life experiences. We see that the foundation of all religions is the local community even though that foundation is often forgotten when the community is forced to focus upon the hierarchical system or the code of laws. Without the community, though, no religion could ever claim an existence. The self-help aspect of community development fits well with the religious notion of personal improvement. The religious tradition of asceticism attests to the quest of the religionist for perfection of self through individual effort. This notion of self-help can also be seen in the many religious communities around the world which provide for themselves the means necessary to improve their own condition, e.g., schools, churches and the like.

The second area of similarity between religious and secular community development centers on the development plan. In religious communities, the plan or covenant is provided at the beginning of the movement. It becomes the focus of all the attentions of the community since it embodies the optimal plan for the development of the religious

community. In secular communities as well, though, we see a desire to operate according to a plan or covenant for the orderly development of these communities. Communities seek, through incorporation, constitutions, formalized agreements and the like, to give structure to their goals, aspirations and development methods. These 'covenants' are not always as successful in the secular community as they are in the religious community but the need, in human affairs, to have a clear understanding of past roots, present situations and future directions seems to apply to both secular and religious communities alike. While the religious covenant may carry the weight of the divine and, therefore, be stronger instruments in the eyes of the community members, secular covenants are subject to changes and to minority/majority provisions which can be the cause of division. The similarities between religious and secular development goals and methods are few, indeed, a fact that is born out by the fundamental differences that exist between the two camps.

5.4 Differences – Religious and Secular

The differences between religious and secular development are not necessarily many in number but they are based in differences in philosophy and orientation and, therefore, very difficult to breach and unify. Just as one of the similarities between the two lies in their desire to have a stable development plan or covenant, a basic difference between

them is that one, religious development, has a covenant while the other, secular development, does not. Secular development is, at best, *ad hoc* or informal and impermanent. Few secular development plans can claim to have lasted for millenia. They cannot even claim to have lasted for centuries. There are probably only a few that can claim to have lasted for decades. For the most part, community development plans last for a few years before being radically changed or completely abolished. On the other hand, religious covenants in the world's major religions have life-times of millenia or centuries, as shown by Figure 1, p. 50. Because of its *ad hoc* nature, secular community development is not likely to achieve the permanence of religious community development and therein lies a major difference between the two.

Another difference between religious development and secular development is that of the transcendence of religion. Religion seeks, through its Covenant, to transcend normal human values and understandings and to achieve a God-like or spiritual set of values or understandings. This is, after all, the basic goal of religion, namely, to put man into communication with a Being higher than himself. If secular community development were ever to accept transcendence as one of its major goals, it would cease to be secular and would become religious. By ending its existence it would have succeeded in unifying its goals with those of religion and would also succeeded in annihilating itself. Since it

is unlikely that this would ever be a desirable goal for secular development, the difference between religious and secular development will always remain.

Secular community development, in its present form, lies somewhere between the individual and formal organizations. It acts as a liaison between these two entities and provides bridges for the two to communicate their goals and aspirations each to the other. On the one hand, community development tries to help the individual succeed in wrenching for himself some of the power and goods that have accumulated to the formal organizations while on the other hand it tries to explain to the individual the nature and uses for the formal organization. Goal setting and decision making behaviors in secular community development have to take into consideration these two facets to every problem. The change agent of secular community development is often caught between being a spokesman for the formal structure and the spokesman for the individual. In religious community development, this dichotomy does not exist. The whole of the covenant includes the individual in its provisions so that there cannot be a separation between formal structure and the individual if the covenant is to be effective. The individual must go beyond his own needs to meet the requirements set down in the covenant by God just as do the formal structures. If any dispute arises between the two, the community becomes divided and the covenant becomes ineffective, a condition

can exist in a religious community but which eventually brings it to sectarian division and destruction or ineffectiveness. While these differences are sufficient cause for the two development methods to remain separate, there is, nonetheless, areas in which there could be an exchange of ideas between the two. There has already been some exchange of ideas between the two, especially in field methods, but there are likely some areas of theory that would benefit from such an exchange.

5.5 Exchange of Ideas

If the hypotheses of this thesis can be considered as having any validity, it would seem that one area in which an exchange between religious and secular development could take place is the development, in secular development, of a process or method by which a firm covenant for development could be developed, enforced and put into effect. Such a covenant would, as a matter of course, have to be developed under the aegis of some stable and permanent formal structure since that seems to be the only way to guarantee its longevity. While that notion may be an anathema to most community development practioners, this method of development seems to be taking place, with some success, in certain nations in the world, most notably, Tanzania, Cuba and China. In the western world, the development of such a covenant seems to be somewhat hampered by the political structures which encourage

a form of anarchical democracy. Even here, though, covenants could be developed on a local level for the development of the local community with some success.

A second area of exchange between secular and religious community development could occur if religion was more willing to examine and make use of the learning and methods of secular community development. Often, much effort is wasted by religion developing its own methods rather than by using proven methods in the secular field and adapting these methods to the purposes and goals of religion. While some of the secular methods may not be adaptable to the religious field, the exchange between the two camps could, "through the clash of differing opinions" (Shoghi Effendi, 1968:22), develop new and innovative approaches to the problems of field practice.

There are likely other areas that could be found where an exchange of ideas between secular and religious development would prove profitable to both. These, though, would require a more detailed examination of field methods in both camps before being of any use. This is beyond the intended scope of this thesis.

5.6 Conclusion

One of the stated aims at the beginning of this study

to permit students of community an opportunity to examine, from both a secular and religious point of view, the nature and aims of covenants as community development plans. The study has addressed itself to the theory of community development and to the nature of the covenant to examine the case of the Bahā'ī Faith and its Covenant as a model of the covenant in action as a community development tool. As a tool of development, it has been shown that religious covenants provide ideal community development plans because of their stability and because of their authority. The examination of such a development plan in a field that has difficulty agreeing on the terms "community" and "development" let alone "community development" should provide some insight into other avenues that could be followed to make community development an art that commands some respect.

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APPENDIX I

The Bahā'ī Faith and its World Community

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INTRODUCTION

The Bahā'ī Faith is an independent world religion with adherents in virtually every country. The Bahā'ī world community – often known as the Bahā'ī International Community – is a cross-section of humanity, including almost all nationalities, classes, trades, professions, rich and poor, literate and illiterate. Its members live in more than 114, 000 localities in over 340 countries and territories – 152 of these independent nations. More than 1,950 ethnic groups and tribes are represented.

BAHĀ'Ī WRITINGS

The writings that guide the life of the Bahā'ī International Community comprise numerous works by Bahā'u'llāh, the Prophet-Founder of the Bahā'ī Faith, and His son, 'Abdu'l-Bahā, and Bahā'u'llāh's great-grandson, Shoghi Effendi, His authorized interpreter. Bahā'ī literature can be read today in over 670 languages and dialects.

BAHĀ'Ī TEACHINGS

The central teachings of the Bahā'ī Faith are the oneness of God, the oneness of religion, and the oneness of mankind. Of religion Bahā'u'llāh teaches:

- that religious truth is not absolute, but relative
- that Divine Revelation is a continuous and progressive process
- that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin
- and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society.

The Bahā'ī Writings encourage the creation of international institutions necessary for the establishment of peace and world order – such as a world federation or commonwealth with executive, legislative, and judiciary arms, an international auxiliary language, a world economy, a mechanism for world intercommunication, and a universal system of currency, weights, and measures.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BAHĀ'Ī COMMUNITY

The basic purpose of human life for Bahā'īs is, in essence, to know and to worship God, and to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The Bahā'ī world community encourages the fulfillment of certain requirements which it regards as integral to this process:

1) The development of good character. This is achieved through prayer,

meditation, and work done in the spirit of service to humanity – all expressions, for Bahā'īs, of the worship of God.

2) The eradication of prejudices of race, creed, class, nationality and sex.

3) The systematic elimination of all forms of superstition through encouraging an unfettered search for truth, and respect for the harmony of science and religion as two facets of truth.

4) The development of the unique talents and abilities of every individual through the pursuit of knowledge and the acquisition of skills for the practice of a trade or profession.

5) The full participation of both sexes in all aspects of community life, including the elective and administrative processes and decision-making.

BAHĀ'Ī LAWS

Besides spiritual laws requiring daily prayer and an annual period of fasting, the Bahā'ī Faith has social laws. It requires monogamy, discourages divorce, and makes marriage conditional on the consent of both parties and their parents. Bahā'ī law also prohibits the use of alcoholic drinks and narcotics.

NON-PARTISAN CHARACTER

The Bahā'ī Faith is not aligned with any government or political party. Bahā'īs may not be members of any political party or partisans of any political faction or ideology. Both individually and collectively, they are enjoined to obey the laws of their respective states and the authority of the legally constituted governments under which they live.

BAHĀ'Ī FUNDS

The institutions and programs of the Bahā'ī Faith are supported exclusively by voluntary contributions from its own members.

BAHĀ'Ī ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER

Having neither priesthood not ritual, the Bahā'ī Faith relies on a pattern of local, national and international administration, created by Bahā'u'llāh. Each locality, for instance, of nine or more adult Bahā'īs, elects each year a council – a Local Spiritual Assembly. At present, there are over 25,000 Assemblies throughout the world.

National Spiritual Assemblies are also elected annually by regionally elected delegates who come together in a national convention. There are over 132 National Spiritual Assemblies. Once every five years, at an international convention, these Assemblies gather to elect the Universal House of Justice, the supreme institution of the Bahā'ī Faith. All Bahā'ī elections take place by secret ballot, with no nominations or electioneering.

APPOINTED OFFICES

Appointive institutions also exist in the Bahā'ī world community. Among them are the Hands of the Cause, Continental Board Counsellors and Auxiliary Board members. Members of these institutions have no authority but rather function to educate, inspire and protect the unity of the Bahā'ī community.

RELATIONSHIP TO THE UNITED NATIONS

The Bahā'ī International Community is accredited in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It is also affiliated with the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and with the U.N. Office of Public Information. It has representatives with the United Nations in New York, Geneva and Nairobi, as well as a special representative for the continent of Africa. The relationship of the Bahā'ī International Community with the United Nations dates from 1948.

BAHĀ'Ī HISTORY

The Bahā'ī Faith was founded in Persia(Iran) by Mirza Husayn-Alī (1817-1892), known as Bahā'u'llāh, the "Glory of God". The word "Bahā'ī" derives from bahā ("glory" or "splendour") and means a follower of Bahā'u'llāh. The Bahā'ī Faith is intimately linked with the Bābī Faith, founded in 1844 by Mīrzā Alī-Muhammad (1819-1850), known as the Bāb or "Gate". The Bāb announced that He was not only the founder of an independent religion, but the herald of a new and far greater prophet or messanger of God, Who would usher in an age of peace for all mankind. In 1863, Bahā'u'llāh declared that He was the one prophesied by the Bāb.

Bahā'u'llāh was exiled from Iran to various places within the Ottoman Empire, and in 1868 was sent as a prisoner to the fortress city of Akka in the Holy Land, in the vicinity of which He passed away in 1892.

Today, the affairs of the Bahā'ī world community are administered by the Universal House of Justice, the supreme elected council of the Bahā'ī Faith.

BAHĀ'Ī WORLD CENTRE

The Bahā'ī World Centre in in the Holy Land. From the time of Bahā'u'llāh's exile to Akka, then part of the Ottoman Empire, the World Centre has been established in the two cities of Akka and Haifa. The Bahā'ī Holy Places in those two cities consist of the shrines of the Founders of the Faith —the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh — and historic sites associated with Them. It was Bahā'u'llāh Who instructed that the World Centre of His Faith be in the neighbourhood of these Shrines.

STATISTICS IN CANADA

No. of Members.....20,000
No. of Indian and Innuit.....3,000
No. of Local Spiritual Assemblies.....333

No. of Localities where Bahā'īs reside.....1500
First Bahā'ī Group (Montreal).....1902
First Local Spiritual Assembly (Montreal).....1925
First National Spiritual Assembly.....1948
(Incorporated, Act of Parliament, 1949)

GROWTH OF THE BAHĀ'Ī FAITH

Worldwide*	1930	1963	1973	1982
Number of countries and territories where the Faith has been established	35	200	335	340
Number of National Spiritual Assemblies	1	56	113	132
Number of Local Spiritual Assemblies	89	4,566	17,037	25,000
Indigenous tribes, races and ethnic groups represented in the Faith		518	1,607	1,950
Canada				
Local Spiritual Assemblies	1	63	200	333
Incorporated Local Spiritual Assemblies		20	65	159
Localities where Baha'īs reside		285	950	1,500
Members	25	2,186	7,500	20,000

*Worldwide membership statistics are not available; a reasonable estimate is 3-4 million.